



# Elsword Time Trouble Volume 4

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## 0. What ends the fight

Crash.

Sound of wall being destroyed was heard. Add took a glance towards the direction of the sound then groaned.

Wall behind the dimension distortion barrier was completely shattered. Clear blue sky could be seen above and streets could be seen below. The wall was blown off completely.

‘So it wasn’t a frontal attack. Was it an attack aiming for our back?’

The strange shout that Chung made before his attack, and a giant explosion that came after.

The El Search Party and Penensio were safe thanks to Add quickly noticing the danger Chung’s weapon posed and opening the dimension distortion mode just in time. Judging by how the soldiers weren’t harmed as well, Chung must be able to adjust the range of his attack.

“I’ll go in.”

Elsword whispered in a low voice as he positioned his sword. He was trying to run in and take Chung down quickly.

Chung seemed slightly surprised by the barrier Add’s Dynamos created but warned sternly right after.

“I adjusted the power just now but I didn’t expect you to block it. This is the final warning.”

“.....”

Chung looked quite powerful but he wasn’t unbeatable if the entire El Search Party attacked him together.

Rena, Elsword and Eve were all giving a glance towards Add. They were notifying Add that they’d act soon as he gave his order.

But Add couldn’t decide quickly. It wasn’t because he didn’t have a plan to suppress Chung. The problem was what happened after.

Although temporary, their target was Hamel’s lord. What will happen after they suppressed this boy by force? They could make entire Hamel...no, the entire nation of Senace their enemy.

On the other hand, it’s not like the problem would solve itself from him keep hesitating.

Just when Add was about to open his mouth after deciding to go ahead and fight ....gazes of the other members got focused in front. Add's tongue froze in place after he followed the others' gaze to look.

Ara was outside the barrier before he had realized it.

"I'm sorry everyone. Troubling you all because of me....."

"Hey, what....."

Add was at a loss for words when Ara apologized while bowing. This barrier absorbed physical shock....but there was no feature to block the people inside from leaving.

I should add it in later. Add thought this while still confused about the situation.

Then Ara relayed abrupt parting words to them.

"Looks like we'll have to part here. Everyone, please take care of yourselves."

"What are you saying?"

"Wait a moment, Ara Haan."

"Ara, what are you...?"

Other members realized what she meant and hastily tried to dissuade her. But Ara shook her head heavily.

"If many people were injured and hurt because of what my elder brother did, then that's also a burden I have to carry. There's no reason for everyone else to get caught up in this."

"Don't say something so absurd Big Sister Ara."

Elsword suddenly spoke angrily.

"That's what I should have said when I was fighting with my big sister. You saying that right now is unfair."

"That's....."

"Alright, we'll surrender."

At that moment, Add held up both his hands then withdrew the barrier.

Elsword, Rena and even Eve couldn't hide their shock and all looked at Add. They thought Add would obviously fight to protect Ara. What was he doing?

Add ignored everyone else's gazes then asked for confirmation with a blunt voice.

“Hey brat. Is the promise from before still valid? The one about where we won’t be involved if we hand over that idiot.”

“My name is not brat, it’s Chung.”

“I’m calling you a brat because you’re responding like that. Anyways....”

Add pulled the bang on his hair with a tired expression. Elsword, Eve and Rena were looking at him with surprised rabbit’s eyes but they still didn’t intrude in on his conversation with Chung.

Did that mean they’ll trust him and watch what he does? This felt mysteriously shocking to Add as he forced himself to focus on the conversation.

“Fine, take her away. Let’s come up with a plan to defeat Ran afterwards.”

“.....”

Chung wordlessly ordered the soldiers with a hand gesture. Soldiers took away Ara’s spear then grabbed both her arms.

Ara looked back with soaked eyes before she got taken away.

“Mr.Add.”

“What?”

Ara bowed to Add’s cold response.

“Thank you for all your help until now. Please take care of the others.”

“.....Leave it to me.”

After Add’s cold response, Ara smiled with teary eyes then got taken away by the soldiers.

Elsword, Rena and Eve stared at Add for a long while and then withdrew their weapons. It felt like things became annoying to deal with but Add decided to keep a clear head for now.

“Something unruly just happened, but let’s start coming up with the plan to beat Ran now.”

That’s the only reason why he could speak to Chung while still smiling.

Although it was unexpectedly difficult.

## 1. Darkness of the Prison

Strategy meeting was held with Add as the lead. El Search Party were guided to their lodges after their initial planning about defeating demons invading Hamel was finished.

It was nearly time for dinner but nobody ate and instead gathered in the boy's bedroom.

“Okay, what are you going to do now Add?”

Rena asked while sitting on a table with her leg stretched out. Rena had normally always worn a leisurely smile. But even she had a stiff expression now after seeing her comrade get arrested in front of her eyes.

“We have to rescue Ara Haan of course.”

“Big Brother Add, you have a plan right?”

Add laughed after seeing the three of them trying to urge him to answer. He had been thinking that they were being unusually quiet. So this is how they interpreted it?

“Kukukuk, wasn't Ara someone that didn't matter?”

“I'm going to get angry.”

“...”

Add shut his mouth unintentionally after hearing Rena's cold warning. Eve must have agreed with Rena because she was glaring at Add critically.

“.....You're all too soft.”

“Haah.... Eve, can you take Elsword and go outside for a moment? I'm going have a bit of talk with Add.”

Rena shook her head as if she was thinking there was no other way. But Add's words weren't over yet.

“And I'm stupidly soft too.”

Add looked up outside the window at the cloudy sky, and at the setting sun then frowned.

He couldn't lose Ara. Eun inside her was the only way to ensure that he could time travel safely.

“Not only that, her skill with the spear is outstanding. She'll be needed in the fight with Elesis later....”

Well, Although Elsword's skills were growing ever so fast. It was risky to leave the front line only to him alone. Add thought as he looked towards the other three.

"Let's organize what happened. So, the temporary lord of this city found out that the demon general and Ara are siblings."

"Ah, is that what happened?"

"You should have understood right away after listening to what Chung was saying."

"The topic was brought up too abruptly."

For Add, this information was obtained through his time travels. But the other members in this timeline were reacting as if this was the first time they've heard about this.

"But isn't that no different from my big sister and me? Couldn't we just explain the situation to Chung?"

"He didn't look like he'd listen. It looked like he was treating Ran as his father's killer."

Add presented them the solution he managed to organize in his head.

"He said he will use Ara as a hostage. Although I don't think Ran is someone who'll care about hostages..... But no harm will come to Ara if she's being used as a hostage. Not only that...."

If need be, Eun will come out and protect Ara. That's why Add wasn't worried when Ara got arrested.

But the other members didn't know about Eun's existence. Well, it would only get complicated if he tried to explain that to them right now.

"Things would have gotten out of hand if we fought there. It was correct course of action to comply with Chung's request for now."

"But what about Big Sister Ara? What are you going to do about her?"

"He'll bring Ara to the fight with Ran if he's planning to use her as a hostage. We just have to look for an opportunity and protect her when the time comes."

Eve made an expression as if she couldn't understand then presented a different method.

"That's not fair. Ara Haan is our comrade who's fought many battles together with us. That lord wouldn't be able to ignore this fact if we reveal it to him."

"This is a different country.... Our words might not be convincing enough."

The name 'El Search Party' was rather well known in the Velder Kingdom. But the situation was different in the Principality of Senace. Their problem right now was the fact that they were in a completely different nation.

"Why don't we make Chung listen to us by force?"

Elsword's solution was reckless but Rena and Eve didn't particularly look like they disagreed. But Add shook his head.

"No. Us being reckless would trouble that knight captain."

".....ugh."

Elsword bit his lower lips in frustration when Penensio was brought up.

Actually, Add didn't care what happened to Pennensio. But Elsword and the other members will.

"So humans also persecute people that didn't do anything wrong."

"Didn't do anything wrong.... Is that really true?"

At Add's words, the other members looked at him with confused gazes. But Add stopped speaking and looked up towards the white ceiling.

That face consumed by fury Chung showed when he heard the name Ara Haan. Add knew exactly what kind of emotion can make a person show that kind of face.

It was a face that people who had their most precious person taken away made when they recalled those detestable memories.

Ara wasn't without sin to Chung. Ara had already wronged him from just being Ran's younger sister. This was an illogical and irrational emotion..... But aren't emotions supposed to be things that were furthest away from logic?

That's why Add didn't want to say anything about Chung's decisions. Add would have done something even more brutal if he was in Chung's shoes.

"Anyways, we're lacking information. We'll act.....after we find all about what happened in Hamel. About what kind of person Chung is and what weapon he uses. We'll let Ara be until then."

"Understood. Where should we go to obtain information?"

Unexpectedly, Eve looked like she was very willing for the task. She must have sensed Add's strange gaze towards her because she denied.

"She's part of the El Search Party as well. I don't quite understand how humans handle situations like this but I'll help however I can."



“I’ll do it too. Big Brother Add.”

“Things like this should be better if done fast as possible right?”

Add was at a loss for words at the three’s response.

What were they going to do if what he was saying was a lie? How can they be so trusting? Add had basically ordered them to leave their comrade alone to be imprisoned. Elsword, Eve and Rena would have fought back in normal circumstances. But they gave up fighting because they thought Add had some kind of a plan.

And even now, they were trusting Add’s words.....and were following his instructions.

Add’s circumstance was that he couldn’t abandon Ara because Eun was necessary. But the three of them didn’t know this and had no doubts that Add was taking all of these measures for Ara’s sake.

There wasn’t even a hint of doubt that Add was lying or trying to trick them.

They were putting their absolute trust in Add.

“Big Brother Add? Your face is red.”

“That also happened at the beach earlier. Do you have a fever or something?”

“What?”

Add unknowingly touched his face then quickly put on his hood to hide his face.

“It’s....nothing.”

Add knew very well that his voice was shaking so it was a struggle to speak at all. Rena laughed from seeing Add pulling down his hood even more. But Add couldn’t say anything back.

He just wanted to suppress and hide these emotions right now.

Because it was way too warm for comfort.

Eve, Rena and Elsword all separated and moved busily to gather information about Hamel, Ran and Chung. But Add who was the one that ordered them to gather information was calmly leaning against the wall without moving.

Of course, it wasn’t like he was really not doing anything. He was organizing his thoughts.

“There’s no way Eun wouldn’t have known this.....and it won’t be difficult for her to escape even if she didn’t know.”

So Ara gave up fighting back and chose to surrender herself.

“That idiot....”

Ara’s decision was correct if you considered the El Search Party’s future. It was because she willingly left the El Search Party to let herself be arrested that the other members could move about freely to gather information right now.

Even then, she was stupid. Aren’t all creatures supposed to prioritize their own life and safety?

Of course that’s not all there is to humans. Even Add had something he wanted so much that he committed a grave sin of ridiculing time.

He could deal with even his own life being in danger if it was for that sake.

“Tch.....”

But it wasn’t even something like that in Ara’s case. This wasn’t because of her beloved brother..... She forfeited her own safety for the sake of the El Search Party.

It left a sour taste in his mouth.

“She’s making things so annoying.”

Add muttered as he activated his Dynamos. Originally, Dynamo’s scanning could only detect life signatures and couldn’t tell those life forms apart. But now that he revamped the space and shockwave formula as per Aisha’s suggestion..... His Dynamo now had personal signature data of each of the El Search Party members.

So Add was now able detect the whereabouts of the El Search Party members even if there was some distance between them.

Add let fly his Dynamos towards the Hamel’s skies while reorganizing his course of action. They needed to clear up the situation in Hamel first in order to return to Velder with the Velder Knights. Thus, they needed to defeat Ran in order to go into their final battle with Elesis in their best conditions. It was better to cause as little commotion in Hamel as possible for that sake. Even if that meant he had to momentarily allow Chung to do as he wished and have Ara treated like a criminal....

“...So she’s in the dungeon.”

Add started to move when he found out Ara’s location. His head was sorted now but his heart wasn’t.

He should give her some scolding after all.

Hamel's underground dungeon.

As expected from the city of water, you could hear sounds of flowing water even down here. Add lightly wiped his hands with the collapsed prison guards groaning in pain in front of him.

This was the result of Add reading the space coordinates with his Dynamos, approaching the dungeon closely as possible, infiltrating with a short distance teleport, and then ambushing the guards with a light electric current.

Ability wise, Add was perfect for infiltration missions. Although he didn't develop his abilities for this sake.

"Hmph"

Add moved onwards after hiding the unconscious guards somewhere they wouldn't be found. A surprised voice was heard from inner most prison cell.

"Mr.Add?"

Ara was holding on to the prison bars and was staring at Add with wide eyes. They made eye contact when Ara looked outside after hearing the guards collapse. Add didn't answer and looked around the cell Ara was being held in.

As to be expected from an underground dungeon, air was stifling and the only place to rest oneself was a cold stone floor. Spending couple days in here would make any healthy person sick.

"How stupid...."

"How did you come here? Ah, could it be that Mr.Add was arrested too?"

Ara looked at Add with a concerned gaze. Add asked bluntly instead of answering.

"Alright, what should I do now?"

"?"

He didn't want to talk for long. Add asked straightforwardly.

"Do you want me to break you out?"

".....No, it's fine."

Ara immediately shook her head. Add had expected with a 50% chance that she would react like this. Add frowned then explained.

"No one will suspect anything if I break you out of here right now. You just have to stay hidden for a while."

“.....I have to atone for the sins Elder Brother committed.”

Add sighed when Ara replied with a face filled with anxiety. He could already somewhat assume what Ara was thinking the moment she gave up resisting and let herself be locked up.

She was crying from a heart wrenching pain just from encountering the atrocities Ran had committed. Of course she wouldn't know what to do when she gets questioned by Ran's victims.

“Eve is worried about you. Rena and Elsword are busily moving around to obtain information for your sake. Are you satisfied now after causing so much trouble for the others?”

“.....I'm sorry.”

“Don't try to pass this away by just saying sorry.”

Add kicked the metal bar in annoyance. Ara got scared and stepped back. He had done it unknowingly but it scared Ara.

“Is this the path you've chosen? Locked up and rotting away in here? Didn't you say you wanted to turn Ran back?”

“But.....”

Ara lowered her head with a dark expression. Destroying the prison bars by force and breaking Ara out wouldn't even take an effort for Add. Of course, the El Search Party would be suspected if Ara escaped.... But they just didn't have to get found out.

Hamel needs help of the Velder Knights and the Velder Kingdom. They couldn't accuse such important reinforcements like the El Search Party because of a mere suspicion.

Conceding in front of Chung was only because it could have turned into an official issue.

“What are you so worried about?”

Add punched the metal bar with his fist as he glared at Ara. Ara didn't get scared this time and didn't avoid Add's gaze.

“Why do you have to pay for sins that your brother committed? Why are you so acting so diffident?”

“That's.....”

“Let's say that up to crying because of what he did was fine.”

Since Add also knew how it felt. But what Add determined after wiping away his tears was to turn back everything.

To obtain power, to jump over time and go back to the time where his precious person was.

That was the life goal of Add(Time Tracer).

“Is being stuck in prison and crying what you wanted to do? If Ran’s so precious to you, then you should think about getting him back. Are you going to give up fighting and leave yourself up to the flow of events?”

This was someone else’s problem.....but it annoyed Add as if it was his.

Even Elsword was better than her. Although Elsword struggled, he chose the path of fighting Elesis. At least that guy had some perseverance. He wouldn’t bend his will even if the fact that Elesis had joined the demons got known to everyone.

And Add was willing to help Elsword out long as it didn’t interfere with his goals.

Since Add also knew how it felt to be unable to give up on your precious person.

Add internally hoped while watching Ara get taken away by the soldiers that she had some other thoughts. That she wasn’t giving everything up..... that she was hoping the El Search Party would come to rescue her.

So this was how it felt to have your hopes betrayed.

“.....Mr.Add.”

“This is so annoying. Listen up.”

Add couldn’t hold in his fit of passion and was speaking without any restraints now. Although he couldn’t understand why he was so angry.

“If you want to fight Ran, if you want to turn Ran back but lack the strength to do so by yourself, then ask me, ask us for help. I already know you are a clumsy idiot so I don’t expect you to do anything that requires a brain.”

“.....”

“So just stand by quietly and fight whenever I tell you to.”

Ara stared at Add with a dazed expression. She was hesitant for a while....then asked carefully.

“Could it be....that you’re trying to comfort me?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. Elsword alone isn’t good enough for our front line. This is just because I lack people to use.”

“.....I’m sorry for troubling you.”

Add started getting even more furious when Ara lowered her head. It almost felt like even talking with Eun would be better than this. He didn’t understand why he felt this frustrated.

Whatever, I don't care now. She wouldn't object if he just broke her out by force.

"Mr.A....."

Wrrrrr. Just when Ara got surprised from the sound of Dynamos activating and was about to attempt to stop Add, footsteps were heard approaching. Add saw the shadow shown by the torch light then quickly activated the optical camouflage mode. This mode could bend light waves to hide his appearance.

He'll wait and knock them out depending on who it was.

Ara noticed Add's intention as well. She must have realized it would cause trouble for Add if she got flustered right now..... so she had her eyes closed tightly and was even holding her breath.

"....."

Add who was staring at Ara with a dumfounded gaze winced when the form of person approaching was revealed. Golden hair shining from the torch light, it was Chung.

He was alone despite his position as a temporary lord. Ara noticed Chung as well and got surprised. She then looked towards where Add was hiding.

"Ah!"

Then she realized she made a mistake and quickly turned her head around. Add lamented internally and started to formulate a plan, in order to ambush Chung if necessary.

"Tell me all you know about Ran."

Thankfully, Chung didn't care much about Ara's reaction. Ara bit her lower lips at the question thrown at her from beyond the bars then shook her head.

"Actually.... I don't know much myself."

"Are you lying to me?"

"I'm honest. Elder Brother turned into a demon because of some other demon.....and he killed all of the people in our village. That's why I went on a journey to turn Elder Brother back."

Chung's cold expression didn't change despite Ara's explanation. It looked like he didn't trust Ara. Ara hesitated then asked a question in return.

"Did Elder Brother Aren say something about me?"

"He told me to send you to the Temple of Water when you arrived here. That he won't attack Hamel anymore if I did that."

Chung closed his eyes then shook his head.

“But I cannot trust the words of a demon. If you’re someone important to Ran.... I’ll have you become a hostage for us.”

“.....If you’re going to fight Elder Brother, can I also fight together with you?”

Chung made a surprised expression but quickly responded sharply.

“How can I trust you? Are you telling me to trust an important sister of a demon that drenched Hamel in blood?”

“But.....”

“Stop. Even if I put away my personal feelings..... People of Hamel resent Ran and his minions. Many people will come after you if the fact that you’re Ran’s sister becomes known.”

Chung sighed as if he was settling his emotions.

“It’s probably safer for you to stay locked up in here.”

“.....”

Ara must have understood what he meant and didn’t ask anymore. Chung also didn’t say anything for a while then clenched his teeth.

“I’ll destroy Ran for sure. I’ll do anything for that sake. So I’ll ask you to obediently follow along. I’ll let you go when Ran’s defeated.”

Ara had her head lowered and didn’t say anything. Chung must have sensed something because he stared at Ara with a complicated expression then turned around.

“I’ll send a guard so ask him if you need something. We’ll head to the Temple of Water soon as we’re ready.”

Chung turned around and left. Add turned off the optical camouflage when he couldn’t hear Chung’s footsteps anymore.

Add’s mouth didn’t open right away after having to unwillingly listen in on the two’s conversation.

Chung was confused. Ran was his hateful enemy. So he must have believed that Ran’s important little sister was also obviously an evil demon. But she was actually a human.....and looked innocent.

But he still couldn’t give up his vengeance

“So what are you going to do now?”

Nothing was going to change even if he kept silent. Ara was sitting crouched up with her head buried in her knees.

“.....I’m sorry Mr.Add. Please go back now.”

“Alright.”

Add couldn’t reproach her anymore after hearing Chung and Ara’s conversation. Ara and Chung’s emotions were mixing up and colliding with one another.

“.....We’ll talk about this later.”

It was lame but that was all Add could say right now.

Lodge where the El Search Party was staying. Boy’s bedroom.

Elsword was sitting on a chair dozing off when Add returned late at night. Elsword abruptly opened his eyes when Add headed to his bed while suppressing the complicated thoughts inside his head.

“You’re late.”

“Good ears you have there.”

Waking up only from hearing person’s footsteps? Elsword made a long yawn then asked while Add was being slightly impressed.

“So how’s Big Sister Ara doing?”

“.....Why would you ask me that?”

“I talked with Sir Penensio, Eve gathered rumors from Hamel’s citizens and Big Sister Rena asked the soldiers for how things were going in Hamel. So it was Big Brother Add’s job to find out what happened to Big Sister Ara right?”

Add didn’t reveal what kind of information he would gather..... Elsword must have noticed this on his own.

But Add didn’t know how to explain this to Elsword.

“What would you do..... If Elesis Killed many people?”

“.....”

“Not only that, what if someone that resents Elesis tried to get revenge? What will you do if that person gets in your way?”

Elsword’s expression turned grave.

“Is that why Big Sister Ara let herself be taken?”



“She can break out any time she wants. She’s just being stubborn.”

Eun was a type that did however she pleased but she tended to respect Ara’s decision. That’s probably why she wasn’t coming out.

“.....What do you think she should do?”

Add didn’t answer and lay down on his bed. Add was trying to change something that had already happened with the power to jump through time.

But normal people couldn’t do that.

The fact that Ran caused suffering for countless amounts of people and took many lives will not change. Then what choice does his sister Ara have to make?

Wouldn’t following what Chung and Ran’s victims wants and becoming a hostage to contribute in defeating Ran be a right thing to do? But then Ara’s wish of wanting to return her brother back to normal cannot be fulfilled.

“.....Phew.”

Although watching Ara locked inside the prison while she’s consumed in doubt was annoying..... It wasn’t that Add couldn’t completely understand how she felt.

No, he was getting annoyed because he could understand her all too well.

Wasn’t Add also like that before he accumulated knowledge and jumped through time? It wasn’t that Add didn’t have any fears of failure or hesitation from ethical point of view like ‘was this really an okay thing to do?’

But he wanted the time where his precious person was alive so much to the point where he could stomp over all of these doubts. Add chose the path of not caring about any ways or means in order to achieve his goal.

But he couldn’t ask that of someone else. He couldn’t pressure Ara to ignore the rage of Chung and the people of Hamel.....and tell her to only strive toward returning Ran to normal.

Although her hesitating and dawdling was infuriating, he couldn’t say anything.

“In the end..... That’s something she has to decide for herself.”

Just like how Add jumped through time, just like how Elsword decided to face Elesis..... there was no point unless she decided it for herself.

At the sound of Add’s sigh, Elsword sitting far behind Add’s asked.

“Then couldn’t you just become a strength for Big Sister Ara?”

“Don’t say something stupid.”

“You just have to do for her what you did for me.”

That was because there was no other choice at the time. It didn’t suit his tastes. Add pulled up his bed sheet then cut off the conversation.

“Let’s talk tomorrow.”

It felt like he’ll dream of something annoying but he should get some rest.

Next day morning.

The El Search Party gathered for breakfast and exchanged the information they gathered.

“It seems Ran commands Shadow demons and their numbers wouldn’t go down no matter how many you defeat. This is an enemy we’ve faced once before.”

“So it’s Shadow Master?”

Eve nodded lightly to confirm. If Ran was the general of Shadow demons, you’d have to say that the fight in Elder where Shadow Master appeared and tried to destroy Eve was also because of Ran.

And when Add didn’t go to the Wally’s Castle, Ran came personally to destroy Eve. Of course, he did say it was because of D’s orders.....

Add had a strange feeling that something was off but decided to pass for now.

Rena explained the information she gathered from the soldiers.

“And during a large battle that took place..... Hamel’s guardian Sir Helputt Seiker and lord Rodross was killed by Ran. It seems Sir Helputt’s son, Prince Seiker who performed outstandingly in that battle ended up taking the role of temporary lord.”

“The same lord we met? Their names are different.”

“That’s the name he gave himself on the battlefield. It seems he said that he won’t use his real name again until he has avenged his father.”

Eve Added.

“People’s opinion of that Rodross person was really bad. He was hated by the masses.”

“.....Yes, everyone seems to have hated him. There are even rumors going around that it was because of Rodross that Sir Helputt was killed despite his extraordinary skills.”

Add nodded after hearing Rena and Eve's stories.

"Then Chung must be highly respected by the soldiers. Since he's son of the hero."

"Yes, everyone trusts and follows him. It won't be an exaggeration to say that he's the spiritual leader of Hamel right now. Although Chung himself just wants to face Ran again..... It seems he couldn't deny the desperate requests of refugees and Hamel's citizens. So he was forced to take the position of a lord."

"I see...."

Add turned his head towards Elsword. Elsword who had just finished eating his meat dropped his fork composedly then spoke about his information.

"I talked to Sir Penensio about Big Sister Ara but it looks like there's no particular way. He said it would rather be safer for her to be inside the prison."

"That's probably right....."

Although the accommodations were horrible, the entire city will become Ara's enemy if her identity was revealed. It looks like Chung was also keeping the fact that Ran's little sister Ara had come to Hamel a secret.

Actually, even as how Add saw it, although Chung was burning with his desire for revenge..... the way how he suppressed his personal feelings and dealt with Ara was very mature. Even after leaving aside the circumstances that made him the lord, Add could tell very well why Chung was trusted by the people of Hamel despite his young age.

"So what will we do now Add? Did you try speaking with Chung?"

"What happened to Ara Haan?"

"She's still in prison. It also seemed she didn't want to leave."

Sour taste lingered on his mouth. Add dropped his fork then muttered.

"It looked like she wouldn't comply even though I told her I'd break her out. It seems she was very shocked by what Ran had caused."

"Yes....."

"Certainly....."

Damage done to Hamel was so brutal to the point where even Eve couldn't continue her words. Even now they could see destroyed buildings just outside their window and it was difficult to find anyone that wasn't injured when you went out into the streets.

“Then shouldn’t we just speak to Chung directly? Say that we’ll defeat Ran in exchange for him releasing Big Sister Ara.”

“It’s not that simple.”

Add shook his head heavily.

“Ran is a target of vengeance for Chung. But Ran is also a blood sibling for Ara. And Chung won’t trust Ara so easily.”

“Then what should we do?”

No one could answer Elsword’s question. This wasn’t a situation where anyone could come up with an acceptable solution.

After a long moment of silence, one who opened their mouth first was Eve.

“We should let the person in question decide.”

“Hmm?”

“Regardless of who’s right or wrong, Ara Haan is our comrade who’s been together with us. We cannot abandon her.”

Add was shocked at what Eve just said. He could understand if it was Elsword or Rena who spoke these words, but for Eve, a Nasod to say something like this?

Eve seemed she was slightly offended when Add looked at her with a surprised gaze. She avoided Add’s gaze as if she didn’t want to care then concluded her words.

“We waited for Elsword when he made up his mind to fight Elesis. It’s won’t be anything different to wait for Ara Haan to make up her mind to fight.”

“Yea, of course! Eve is right!”

Rena got up abruptly from her seat then hugged Eve. She hugged Eve from behind and petted her head as if she didn’t know what to do because she was so proud of a lovely child.

“Rena, I’m not a human child.”

“You’re supposed treat cute kids like this.”

“I cannot understand...”

Add pondered on what Eve said then nodded. Ara also needed some time to settle her feelings. This wasn’t something that could be solved from him pressuring Ara because she reminded him of his past self when he hesitated about time travel.



“You’re supposed treat cute kids like this.”

“I cannot understand....”

“We have to go to the Temple of Water in order to defeat Ran and Ara is also set to come with us in that time. I’ll go visit her from time to time until then.”

“Alright. Then what should I do Big Brother Add?”

“Try to become friendly with Penensio and the Velder Knights. That’s all you have to do.”

They could end up in a contest of strength against Hamel and Senace over Ara. Add had spoken with this in his calculations but Elsword nodded without any particular thoughts.

“I’ll do that.”

“Alright, then.... Let’s wait for the right moment.”

This was the time to suppress their impatient hearts.

Dungeon.

Sound of water dripping was heard. Ara who had her head buried in her knees realized that she had dozed off.

The underground’s cold air awoke her senses ....and she slowly started to recall why she was confined in this unfamiliar place.

“.....Elder Brother.”

Ara’s older brother, Aren Haan, now turned into the demon Ran, was committing bloody massacre.

She actually had been somewhat prepared for this. It was Ran who had turned Ara’s hometown into a sea of blood after all. He could always do such things to other towns as well.

But being prepared and watching it first hand was different.

She had vaguely thought stopping Ran soon as possible and turning him back would solve everything..... But she hadn’t put into account the feelings of people who lost their home, fortunes and families to Ran.

It was way too obvious for them to resent Ran.

“What should I do.....?”

Then was it really right for Ara to try and turn Ran back? Wasn’t she just selfishly prioritizing her own wishes while ignoring the feelings of people who wanted revenge?

The reality she faced heavily pressed down on her shoulders.

Chung's rage was reasonable. It won't be an exaggeration to say that he imprisoned Ara in order to protect her. Numerous people will come to hate Ara when she's found out as Ran's little sister. It won't end with just hatred; they will try to harm her.

Rage of those people will not just end with Ara and surely will get the El Search Party caught up in this as well.

It the first place, wasn't it because of this reason that Chung and the El Search Party had to face off? The El Search Party won't just stand by and watch Ara be persecuted.

"Since they're all good people...."

She could confirm this in their fight in Elder, and in their fight with Elesis.

Elsword was honest-to-good righteous and took care of others well, Eve also takes care of others more than she seemed, Rena always understood other's feelings and didn't give them any moment to feel depressed.....

And while Add had a sharp-tongue, he also cared deeply about others as well. He even came to see imprisoned Ara secretly.

"I can't trouble them because of me....."

Eun must be asleep because she wasn't speaking.

Ara looked down on her own hand then let out an agonizing sigh. She could destroy and break out of this prison if she wanted to.... But she couldn't get a grasp on what she should do after that.

She didn't want to trouble the El Search Party.

Chung's desire for vengeance was obvious.

But she wants to turn Ran back into her elder brother Aren.

She didn't know what to do because all of her desires were colliding with one another. Ara was deep in worry then her body suddenly shook. She thought at first that it was because of cold air in this underground dungeon but her body was already kicking the ground and dodging.

Her instinct as a martial artist was warning her of danger.

"You're a lucky child as always."

A seductive voice was heard from across the darkness. A voice that she heard before, Ara instinctively tried to grasp her spear but she was bare handed right now.

Dimension gate opened in front of Ara who had the prison bars to her back. An uninvited guest revealed herself through the dark hole.

“Hohoho..... It would have been easier for you to just stay seated.”

“.....Karis!”

A seductive woman with red hair appeared inside the prison cell.

She had ample breasts, thin waist and her thighs were blindingly bright. Her attire was very revealing as if she was aware of her own beauty and wanted to show it off.....But the horns on her head and purplish wings on her back was conveying that she wasn't a human.

Beauty with an evil aura about her. A predator that shook people's heart and instilled them with fear just from making eye contact.

Succubus Queen Karis.

She was one of the demon generals and the person responsible for turning Aren into Ran. She was a loathsome enemy who had brought about all of these tragedies for Ara.

“Steel Body!”

Putting her weight on her shoulders, Ara abruptly launched an attack forwards towards Karis just as she was just walking out of the dimension gate.

Ara wasn't weak even without her spear. This strike could destroy even a boulder.

“Don't be so hasty. I was in middle of talking.....”

Karis smiled seductively with her eyes then lightly swung her wing towards Ara. Her sharp yet sturdy wings, when swung like this, could become a blade that could cut across the air.

“Ugh?!”

Ara who was charging got a cut on her waist as she backed out quickly. Then her second wing grazed by the place where Ara's neck had been just a moment ago.

Ara would have been critically injured if she had persisted to continue with the attack.

“Ohohoho, you seem much cuter than before now.”

Karis majestically withdrew her wings then looked at Ara while stroking her chin. It was a gaze like the spider evaluating a butterfly that got caught on its webs.

Ara could sense her own lack of skill all too well. Even so, Ara pressed on her wound as she steadied her breath.



“.....Haaaah.”

Karis was too strong of an opponent even if Ara had her spear and wasn't injured. So this was the time to borrow Eun's power.

“Lord Eun?”

But Eun didn't answer when Ara called. Just when Ara was startled and was trying to call Eun again, Karis withdrew her smile then approached one step closer towards Ara.

“Don't run about too wildly now, cute pipsqueak lady. Here I came to have a nice chat with you and you attack me? Isn't that a bit harsh?”

“I have nothing to talk about with you!”

Ara didn't hide her rage. All the tragedies she suffered and the horrors that Hamel went through..... Could actually be said that it was because of this demon.

Since she turned the ever so righteous Aren Haan into the demon Ran.

“Seeing you react so hatefully is cute too. You have a different taste about you than kids back at my place.”

Odds were overwhelmingly against her. Ara with her back against the prison bars thought up numerous methods of attack but none of them felt that they'd work on Karis. Her instinct as a martial artist was warning her that Karis wasn't an opponent she could face with her skills right now.

Ara was struggling to think of a way. But she stopped hesitating and launched a slap when Karis approached closer.

While it looked soft, this strike had enough force to take down any normal opponents..... Ara had instinctively launched the strike just now because of Karis closing the distance between them.

“I told you to stay put.”

Karis simply dodged with a teleport then stood in front of Ara by stepping on her feet. They were so close now that their noses were almost touching. Ara got surprised and tried to escape but Karis whispered in a low voice.

“I came here in the place of that Elder Brother that you like so much.”

“What?”

Ara momentarily paused when she heard that Karis came here because Aren, Ran sent her. Seeing Ara's reaction, Karis giggled as she stroked the tip of her hand across Ara's cheek then down to her nape. Ara got goose bumps as she tried to escape quickly but in that moment, Karis grabbed Ara's waist tightly with her hand.



It was the place that was cut by the wing earlier.

“Aaaaaaaah!!”

Even Ara who was trained for battle couldn't help but to scream in pain after getting the wound that was already torn and bleeding grabbed with such a force.

Hearing Ara's painful scream, Karis whispered seductively.

“Don't resist when you lack the strength to. It makes me want to tear you apart.”

“Ugh....”

While Karis's appearance was a glamorous beauty, her true identity was that of a demon general. She was a monster that could tear apart a bull's head with a sheer power of her grip.

Karis killing Ara right now was easier than flipping a hand over.

But that didn't matter. Ara would have never spoken about justice in the first place if she was going to submit just because she lacked strength. When Ara suppressed her pain and threw her hand again, Karis sighed as she lightly blocked it with her palm.

“My mood is starting to get worse from you keep resisting like this. Should I kill around half the humans here before I go back?”

“You can't!! I won't let you do that!!”

“That's why you should cooperate with me so I won't do that. Alright?”

The tone that she spoke these words in was soft but it was actually a threat that she'll really do it if Ara didn't stay put. And this demon....already has done such a thing before.

Town dyed in blood, Ara froze after hearing Karis' warning where she'll re-enact that tragedy again. Seeing that Ara stopped resisting, Karis giggled and looked pleased.

“There, there. Stay put. Good girl.”

Karis smirked as she stroked Ara's cheek. Ara closed her eyes tightly while enduring the humiliation. If this was her problem alone....all she had to do was fight with all she had. But she couldn't let the threat of Hamel's destruction pass.

“....”

When Ara didn't say anything and continued to endure, Karis looked like she lost interest then took her hand off Ara as she backed out.

“I want to toy with you some more.... But I'll let you off since I have some other business today. Ran told me to relay this message to you.”

Karis made a sinister smile.

“Become a demon Ara. Let’s be together like the old times.”

“How ridiculous!”

Karis lightly waved her hand when Ara reacted disgusted.

“I can turn you into a demon even right now if you want. Although I personally like how you look right now that I want to stuff you then keep you like this forever.....”

“I refuse!”

She would rather die. She didn’t have even a slightest intention of becoming a demon. Karis mocked enraged Ara.

“Refusing your beloved brother’s request so immediately likes this? What a cruel little sister.”

“You are the one who turned Elder Brother into a demon Karis! And Elder Brother isn’t making correct judgements right now.”

“Then are you judging correctly?”

Karis spoke coldly.

“Berthe was thrown out because he was useless, Chloe lost because she was stupid. But do you honestly think you guys can defeat Ran? And even if you guys were to get extremely lucky and defeat Ran somehow, how about me? Do you honestly think you guys can defeat me?”

“.....”

Ara knew very well know strong Karis was because she had fought her before. Even when Karis hadn’t revealed her true powers, she was equivalent at least to Elesis’ 1<sup>st</sup> form.

Even if Ara had her spear and could fight by borrowing Eun’s powers..... She’ll be glad if she could even injure Karis.

“You guys cannot escape lord D’s grasp no matter how much you struggle. We’ll soon completely conquer time and space.”

“.....”

Ran, Karis and Elesis..... Will the El Search Party be able to defeat the demons filled with these mighty foes?

Ara would have normally declared that justice will prevail. But she couldn’t answer right now for some reason.

“Ah, I forgot to add the condition. Ran said he’ll spare the El Search Party members if you become a demon.”

“What do you mean.....”

“You’re only bound to become enemy of the humans if you remain amongst them anyways. Don’t everyone know already that you’re Ran’s little sister?”

Chung was keeping it a secret right now but it will be revealed soon enough if Ara was to be used as a hostage.

“There’s no place for you to be at peace in Elrios anymore. Place beside us demons is the only place left for you now.”

“.....”

Ara couldn’t answer that it wasn’t true. After witnessing the tragic state the Hamel was in.... it felt like she didn’t have any excuses even if entirety of the human race were to resent her.

“So become a demon. I’ll especially make you into a pretty form.”

“I refuse. Because that’s.....not the righteous path.”

Ara stubbornly shook her head. Karis narrowed her eyes then sneered.

“I didn’t expect you to obediently listen anyway. But remember this, you being stubborn will mean the death for the El Search Party.”

“.....”

“That arrogant delusion about being able to defeat us will be shattered when you see the corpses of your friends. Turning you into a demon in that moment when you are crying alone amongst the corpses of your loved ones unable to do anything .... might be rather fun as well.”

Karis turned around to open the dimension gate.

“I’ll be anticipating a different answer when we meet again. If not.... Be prepared ♡.”

Karis disappeared through the dimension gate and silence dwelled inside the prison cell again. Ara who was leaning against the bars let out a cry.

“.....Ah.”

She had been enduring the pain from bleeding wound with sheer will until now. But that just reached its limit. Ara dropped down as if she was collapsing.

“Cough cough.”

She coughed painfully and dust flew about. Her body shook as the pain from her wound became worse. It was a light cut so it wasn't fatal....but it still hurt.

But her heart was in pain more than her body.

So weak.

She couldn't even fight back properly when the enemy who had turned her elder brother into a demon was in front of her.

“.....I'm sorry.”

Ara unconsciously apologized without knowing who the apology was directed to.

She was sorry to everyone. To Elder Brother Aren who felt ever so far now even though she had determined that she'll turn him back to normal no matter what..... to many lives that suffered from the calamity that Ran caused, to Chung who was burdened with the resentment from losing his father.

And to the El Search Party that she's traveled together with up till now, Elsword, Eve, Rena, Add.

She was sorry to everyone. She could only say these words.

“I'm sorry.....”

Despite how she apologized again and again.

Even though it felt so painful as if her heart was being torn apart.

There were no tears for some reason.

## 2. Queen of Nasods

Demon subjugation army was formed and they finally started to march towards Temple of Water.

People participating in the subjugation army were Penensio and the Velder Knights, Chung and the El Search Party and.... imprisoned Ara.

El Search Party members each stared at the carriage with worried eyes. The carriage being guarded by the Velder Knights was covered up in order to hide who was inside. But the person inside was Ara.

“.....I’m worried.”

“Since we’re marching together anyways, can’t we just walk together?”

Seeing that Rena and Elsword couldn’t take their eyes off the carriage, Add sighed then responded.

“Don’t be stupid. Be patient for now.”

“How long do we have to be patient Add?”

Eve questioned Add with a cold voice.

“All you’ve been telling us is to be patient. I’d like you to promise me exact time when Ara Haan can regain her freedom.”

“Stop thinking that this matter is so simple.”

Eve’s request was reasonable but even Add couldn’t answer her for sure.

As the representative of the El Search Party along with Rena, Add kept participating in the strategy meetings with Hamel. But he wasn’t able to make any explicit requests concerning Ara in those meetings.

It was because if you took away all emotional ties, Chung’s method of handling things was right.

“Then what if I ride on the carriage together with her? How about that?”

Add dived into his thoughts for a moment at Rena’s suggestion. Although it was too much to ask for Ara’s freedom right now.... Having companions riding together with her inside the carriage could be negotiated.

Add’s heart moved so he nodded.

“I’ll try negotiating.”

Add moved his Dynamos forward and approached Chung who was traveling in front of the army. Chung had volunteered to be in front because he knew the terrain well. He nodded politely as Add approached.

“Do you need something?”

“About the person inside the carriage.... We’d like to take turns riding the carriage together with her.”

“You can go ahead.”

Add was surprised when Chung answered right away seemingly without any particular thoughts.

“Is it okay for you to agree so easily?”

“If you were intending on breaking out Ara Haan, you would have already done so. Regardless.... It would be troublesome for me if you people decided to honestly pressure me by force.”

Just as he said, the only person here from Hamel’s side at the moment was Chung. They had left Hamel’s soldiers behind to guard the city just in case. This was a measure taken because the damage Hamel took from Ran was too large.

Although Penensio was a righteous person, he was a person from Velder in the end. Chung was alone amongst foreigners right now.

“But this is far as I can concede. I’d like you people to respect my opinion as well.”

“...I’ll accept for now.”

Chung was saying he’d accept the El Search Party’s suggestion in exchange for confirming his opinion that he won’t free Ara. It was a fair negotiation based on mutual trust.

Add decided he might as well ask another question to Chung.

“I actually know Ran a bit myself as well.... Do you really think using a hostage will work on him?”

“I think it’s a half-half chance. I’m honestly not expecting much.”

Hostile expression showed immediately on Chung’s face when Ran was mentioned. Then he quickly changed his expression back as if he was a bit embarrassed by it.

“....I agree that Ara Haan doesn’t seem to be a dangerous individual. But I’m the temporary lord of Hamel and Hamel has been destroyed by Ran. I cannot handle this matter just based on my own instincts.”

“That’s right.”

Chung smiled slightly when Add agreed.



“Thank you for understanding. I’ll carry this out in a way where she doesn’t come to harm much as possible.”

“Please do that.”

Add accepted with a voice soft enough to surprise even himself as he turned the Dynamos around to return to where the El Search Party was.

“Talk is over. You can go inside.”

“Alright. Call me if something happens.”

Rena nodded as she approached the Velder Knights that were guarding the carriage.

Rena’s steps were very quick. She never got the chance to talk with Ara face to face even though she had been worried about her last couple of days,

“I’ll go talk with her after Rena.”

“Come to think of it.... Why are you worried about Ara so much?”

“I’m not particularly worried. I think it’s not righteous to pass by a person that’s being treated unfairly.”

Elsword who’s been walking beside Eve joined in on their conversation.

“But you asked me about a way to get along with human girls..... ow!”

“Don’t say something strange Elsword.”

Reby flew away then came back after hitting the back of Elsword’s head. Eve noticed that Add was staring at her with a strange gaze so she spoke to deny.

“I was just asking for some advice since I was finding understanding human girls a bit difficult. Do not misunderstand.”

“Hoooh.....”

Eve frowned slightly when Add smiled vaguely.

Add felt like he’d get some interesting responses if he said something here but he purposely stayed quiet.

Eve looked already friendly with Rena and judging by how she was caring about Ara this much, it seemed that Eve attitude towards people other than Elsword was loosening up.

Even though they had all traveled together, girls and boys bedrooms had always been different. Various things must have happened out of Add’s sight.

Eve looked offended when Add continued to smile so she hastened her steps and moved forwards. Add smirked as he looked at Eve's back move further away. Elsword changed the subject.

"Anyways, do you think Ran will be strong?"

"Of course he will be."

Add answered him right away. Add wasn't even a match for Ran when they ran into each other in Elder. But Add had been through many battles since then and had become stronger by enhancing his Dynamo's formulas.

Not only that, there were others beside him this time. Eve, Elsword, Rena and Ara were together with him and that guy Chung looked quite skilled as well.

Ran was a powerful foe but Add felt like they had a chance.

"Hmm...."

"Don't worry about it. He'll be weaker than Elesis."

"Of course."

Elsword agreed to Add's baseless words as if it was obvious. It almost felt like if Add said that Elesis was the strongest person in the world, Elsword would just respond by saying 'why would you say something so obvious?'

When Add laughed slightly, Elsword tilted his head.

"Come to think of it. You seem to be laughing more often Big brother Add."

"...Kukukuk, it's nothing."

Add somehow became flustered and turned his head away. Eve was prudishly walking in front of them by herself and Rena was talking with Ara inside the carriage.

"It doesn't feel like we'll lose...."

As an engineer, Add had always lived by trusting in numbers and percentages and yet these baseless words came out of his mouth without him realizing.

Night.

The demon subjugation army stopped near the Resiam Outskirts and prepared to camp out. The El Search Party was getting ready as well when Rena approached and spoke to Add.

"Add, could you go see Ara for a bit?"

“Didn’t everyone talk with her already? Was there a problem?”

“Umm, actually....”

When Rena trailed her words, Add instinctively looked towards Elsword and Eve.

Add didn’t feel anything special seeing how those two were in front of the campfire getting ready for dinner. Since those two had gone in and talked with Ara already, Add might as well do so too.

“Alright, I’ll go.”

“Yea, I’m counting on you. Here.”

Rena handed to Add two bowls of warm stew that she prepared beforehand.

Add took them without saying a word then headed to the carriage. He was planning on discussing about their current situation with Eun anyways.

It shouldn’t matter if he comforted Ara before doing that.

“I’m coming in.”

Add abruptly entered by opening the carriage door then sat on the chair inside. Ara was sitting inside the carriage with a numb expression. Then she recognised Add and lowered her head to greet him.

You could tell just from a single glance that she wasn’t her usual self. Ara took the stew when Add handed it to her. But it didn’t look like she had much appetite.

“Be sure to eat properly. The fight will start soon.”

“.....Yes.”

Add frowned after hearing her barely audible response. He understood that Ara was feeling dejected right now, but this wasn’t right.

“If you’re worrying about Chung and Hamel, put those matters aside for now. Just focus on defeating Ran.”

“.....”

Add stopped eating his own stew when Ara didn’t answer. This was a bit strange. Add put down his bowl and asked seriously.

“What’s going on?”

“.....It’s nothing.”

“You’re wasting my time. What’s going on?”

Ara's expression turned even darker when Add asked repeatedly. After looking closely, she had a dark circle under her eyes and had a pale expression. It looked like she didn't get any proper sleep.

Her days inside the prison wouldn't have been comfortable. But there was something else to this.

"Say it quickly."

".....I can't tell you."

"If you don't want to talk, I'll talk with Eun instead. Send her out."

Ara bit her lower lips when Eun was mentioned. Her body shook thinly then she spoke quietly after a long pause.

"It's because I've been having strange dreams recently....."

"Dreams?"

".....A dream where Mr.Elsword was killed by Ms.Elesis."

Add paused. There was something that rose up in his mind.

"Not only that, Ms.Eve was killed by Elder Brother Aren in Elder....."

"....."

They weren't dreams. They were events from the timelines that Add had experienced.

When Add stayed frozen, Ara continued to speak sparsely while looking down only at her palms on top of her knees.

"And I know that this will happen..... So I try to fight. But I always lack the strength..... I cannot do anything even though everyone is killed by the demons in front of my very eyes....."

"Forget it. Those don't have anything to do with the present."

Add spoke stiffly after suppressing his shock. It was true that those events had happened but they no longer held any meaning.

They were all times that Add abandoned.

But despite Add's words, darkness soaked inside Ara's expression didn't disappear.

Just when Add was trying to choose his words to respond to this unexpected situation.... Ara's hair seemed to flash brightly then got dyed in white.

Then with a 'poof' sound, pair of fox ears appeared on her head.

"That's no good, boy. Treat her more kindly."

Add would have normally felt unpleasant by this change but he let out a sigh of relief this time. He was actually glad.

“What happened? How does Ara know about those times?”

“She knows because I know, boy.”

Eun smiled coldly as she crossed her legs. Add knew that Eun had the power to look into the future. But wasn't that unrelated to Ara?

Eun must have read Add's question so she explained.

“In martial arts, one trains to read the opponent's mind. You predict beforehand how your opponent would move then respond. Your opponent's line of sight, breathing, weight, balance, movement of their body, flow of the surrounding air, you combine all these factors to read your opponent's moves in order to stay one step ahead of them.”

“So?”

“Fundamentally, telepathy ability that I use isn't too different from this. I read the breathing of all creation and combine those in order to look into the future.”

“What does that have to do with this?”

Enough with the explanations. How was it possible that Ara knew about times that Add abandoned? Eun let out a thin sigh when Add pressed for an answer.

“A fissure has formed in Ara's consciousness. Thus she started to become influenced by me. Our souls are merging together.”

That sounded extremely dangerous to Add but Eun continued her words leisurely.

“For a human, Ara's as a vessel is extremely large. Vessels like her are so rare that you can barely find one or two out of thousands. Humans like her are able to carry my power up to certain amount. But no matter how large the vessel is, she's only a human in the end.”

“.....Ara is going to break because she cannot withstand your power?”

“No, it's different.”

Eun shook her head to deny Add's guess.

“As Ara's heart breaks, my powers and memories end up filling the broken gap. If this continues, Ara will turn into something that isn't Ara. Just like how Aren turned into Ran.....”

“.....”

“What an unfortunate fate these siblings have, so unfortunate.”

Add felt the chills from these words that Eun was confessing so calmly.

The scenery of moonlight coming through the carriage's small window to shine upon Ara's whitely dyed hair was.... beautiful yet frightening at the same time.

".....How come you're speaking about this as if it was someone else's business?"

"Because there's no other way."

"Then we should try to come up with one before...."

Eun shook her head.

"Boy is misunderstanding. Ara not becoming Ara anymore also means I won't be myself anymore. What should we call Ara who's merged together with me and what should we call me who's merged together with Ara?"

"....."

"Should we give her a name beforehand? How do you like Eunara?"

What a surprising talent Eun had to speak about such things so leisurely. Add lowered his head and could only groan.

"If things continue like this, something that's a mix of Ara and my consciousness will come out as a result. Well, she'll be much stronger than we are now at the least."

"But that also means you'll disappear. How can you be so casual about this?"

"I've lived for a long time so I don't have any big attachments to life. I do have something I desire ..... But it can't be helped if it cannot be fulfilled."

Eun was speaking about her own demise ever so lightly. But even if Eun had accepted her demise, there shouldn't be any reason for Ara to get mixed up in this.

"How about if you...."

"If you're going to say I should leave Ara's body right now, that's impossible. Ara borrowed too much of my power up till now. Even if I were to leave her, the residues will delve into Ara's consciousness instead. It will only become worse."

"Then what is the solution to this?"

Eun shook her head.

"Even I don't know too much about feelings of humans in detail. There's no other way but for Ara to firmly guard her consciousness."

“....”

“Wielding large power results in large recoil. Ara has been wielding my power to achieve greater feats than her skills would normally allow. It is now time for her to withstand the recoils”

Tragedy in Hamel had caused a fissure in Ara’s heart.... And Eun’s memories and abilities started to fill the gap. If this continues, Eun and Ara will merge together and be reborn as something that isn’t Ara or Eun.

Just like how Aren became Ran, Ara will turn into something that isn’t Ara.

“You don’t have to mind this, boy. I’ll still have the eyes to see into time and space even if I change. I’ll still assist boy with time travel.”

“How can you tell me not to care about this?”

“Doesn’t boy have nothing to do with this issue?”

“....”

Add couldn’t answer right away. She was correct. Add’s goal was solely to obtain Eve’s core and go back in time.

Even if Ara’s heart was shattered and she turned into something else during the process....

“Just tell me the solution.”

“Hoho, boy is being unexpectedly caring towards Ara. Did your thoughts change after seeing her in her swimsuit?”

“Stop saying unhealthy things. I have no idea what will pop out if you and Ara get merged together and I don’t know if whatever that comes out will be controllable.”

“My, so you’re saying Ara has to stay as she is because she’s naïve and listens to your orders well? How cruel. Although Ara would have been happy to hear that.”

“I meant that I’m just not fond of things with vague identities.”

Add frowned with displeasure when Eun smiled mysteriously.

“I’m just striving for the result I want while putting in some light extra effort. So just tell me the solution.”

“Well, the answer is simple. Bring comfort to Ara’s heart.”

That was an extremely difficult condition. Ara couldn’t hold back her tears after seeing the atrocities that Ran committed to Hamel and thus willingly accepted to be chained up and become a prisoner.

One must be a saint if they still had a comfortable heart after going through all this.

“Just what should I do exactly?”

“How about you have a heartfelt talk with her while bathing together? I’ll tell Ara beforehand.”

“I’ll do that.”

“Hmm?”

Add replied as he stood up. Eun momentarily made a surprised expression then smiled voluptuously right after.

“So there are days when boy responds like this too. It’s a nice change.”

“Don’t make me laugh. I’ll do this in my own way.”

He realized that Ara needed mental comfort. And there was someone else that was suited for this job.

Soon as Add exited the carriage, he headed toward the campfire where the El Search Party was sitting around. Elsword and Eve just finished dinner and were sitting across from each other staring at the campfire.

Add would have normally stopped and observed the two but he had a business to take care of right now. He grabbed Eve’s arm and pulled her up right away.

“What is it?”

.....He tried to pull her up but she was heavier than expected.

When Eve looked back towards him, Add let go of her arm naturally as possible then requested.

“I have something to talk to you about. Follow me.”

“We can talk here.”

“It’s important.”

At Add’s persistence, Eve looked at Elsword for a moment then got up from her seat. When they had distanced themselves away from the others far enough so that they wouldn’t be heard, Eve asked.

“How did your talk with Ara Haan go?”

“It wasn’t good. So about that.....”



It seems the others didn't know about Eun's identity or Ara's crisis. It was somewhat difficult for Add to explain it to them as well. The main objective here was Ara's mental stability anyways.

"I'd like you to treat her well."

"I'm planning to do so without you telling me."

"I didn't mean that...."

When it came to caring for Ara, Rena didn't even needed to be mentioned and Eve was also caring for her quite a lot. For Eve who had only focused her attention on Elsword before, this was a change that was worthy of attention. But this much wasn't enough.

"What is it then?"

"I'd like you to be even friendlier with her."

Add tried to speak the words he had prepared beforehand. But the words got caught inside his mouth and he ended up speaking in circles.

"I don't understand what you mean. I'm not particularly distancing myself from her."

"Haaah...."

Everything worked out so smoothly during the simulation inside his head but it was really difficult to actually say them out loud.

"I mean, since Ara's condition isn't too good.... See if you can comfort her well."

".....Comfort her?"

Eve looked like she didn't have much to say about this. Eve who didn't have any emotions (or believed that she didn't) only knew what it meant to comfort others from just encyclopedic knowledge.

"I'm sorry but I'm a Nasod. I don't know anything about this. I think it's better for you to ask Rena for something like this."

"Rena is already doing enough."

Although he was sorry to say this.....things must have come to this because just having Rena wasn't enough.

"It's not enough with just Rena. You'll have to do it as well."

".....That's a troublesome request. What should I do exactly?"

"....."

Add wasn't too talented in comforting others as well.

He was confident in his abilities to treat someone cold-heartedly, but his mouth stopped whenever he tried to say something kind. It didn't suit his personality.

"I don't know either."

"You don't know either and yet you're telling me to do it?"

Eve's tone felt dumbfounded. Honestly, both Add and Eve were people that were furthest distances away from comforting other people. Although their fundamental reasons differed since Eve was because she wasn't knowledgeable about emotions and while Add knew about emotions, he prioritised his own goals.

"I'm a Nasod. Telling me, a Nasod to comfort humans...."

"Think about it since you don't know how."

Add comforted Ara before they met Chung but he couldn't prevent the fissure from forming in Ara's heart.

Rena was the same and Elsword wasn't any better. There was only one person left to count on now.

"You're the only one left who can do something for Ara."

"...."

How serious Add was right now must have been conveyed because Eve didn't refuse right away. She seemed to think deeply for a while then shook her head.

"Telling me to comfort her without giving any particular methods to do so, it's too vague. I'll have to ask Rena for advice."

"No, you can't do that."

Add immediately shook his head. That kind of method won't do at all.

"Comfort Ara after thinking about this by yourself."

"The chance of success isn't too high if I try by myself."

"It doesn't matter. Since I'll try in my own way as well."

He just had to get rid of the reason that was shaking up Ara's heart. In the end, the core reason why Ara was suffering was because of Ran.

Ara's mind would stabilize faster if they could defeat Ran soon as possible and received minimal casualties during the process. Everything would be solved if...he explained the situation to Chung

to make him accept Ara's situation, unite their strength to defeat Ran.... Then turn Ran back into Aren as Ara wished.

"It looks like you have something on your mind as well."

"So, what will you do?"

"I'll accept."

Add had expected Eve to resist more but Eve accepted unexpectedly easily.

For a Nasod to accept the suggestion telling her to comfort a human so easily? Just when Add was about to ask one more time for confirmation, Eve spoke first.

"Since I know you care about Ara Haan."

"I'm telling you right now, it's not because of human male and female relationsh...."

"I know that it's not."

Add was a bit surprised at this unexpected response. Eve tended to make mistakes about Add and Ara's relationship before but it wasn't the case this time.

"Recently, I think I've come to know a bit about what it means to care for other people."

".....You're changing."

Add unconsciously exclaimed. Eve, who was a Nasod was changing. One couldn't even imagine Eve from back in Ruben would have said words like this.

"I don't understand what you mean."

"You don't have to understand. Kukukuk."

Add cackled joyously.

He had forgotten recently because there had been so much going on. But Eve was without a doubt one of a kind masterpiece that will never exist again in history.

Eve was changing from being together with the El Search Party.

"I'll look forward to a good result, Queen of Nasods. Kahaha!!"

"....."

Eve looked very coldly at Add laughing for a moment then returned to the campfire. It somehow felt like he missed a great chance but Add didn't stop laughing.

.....Since it felt like it would look stranger if he stopped.

Nothing stood in the way of the subjugation army even until the next day's sunset.

"Shadow demons should have appeared by now....."

"Are they drawing us in on purpose?"

Add also delved into his thoughts from what Penensio said while he was instructing the Velder Knights to prepare to camp out. Even though they were inside the enemy territory right now, they haven't found any hint of demons.

"But for what reason?"

"Maybe they are trying to block our retreat path. We'll have to be careful."

Penensio carefully expressed his opinion. Add shook his head.

"They won't need to act like this if that's the case. Didn't you say demons that destroyed Hamel also traveled using dimension gates? Demons that are disturbing Elrios right now are rather free from spatial restrictions. So don't think of them within the bounds of reason."

"I see, that's right."

Add stopped speaking when Penensio nodded to agree with him. Add also knew that for demons to move around using dimension gates, they needed the Dark El, and that Dark El was a limited resource so demons couldn't overuse it.....but Add didn't reveal this fact.

In order to defeat Ran, they had to go to the temple regardless of if it was a trap or not. Although he couldn't deny that there were other reasons like he didn't know what might happen to Ara if they delayed longer.....

".....It wouldn't be bad to move with haste anyways."

As Add rid himself of the distracting thoughts, he saw Eve in the corner of his sight.

Her silver hair was shining from the twilight's light. The bright skin of the mechanical doll amongst the soldiers felt disparate yet beautiful.

So beautiful to the point where she had stolen Add's gaze before he realized it himself.

Eve was talking with the soldiers, then she must have felt Add's gaze because she turned around to look at him.

Add felt guilty for some reason so he tried to look away but Eve approached him and suddenly started a conversation as if this was a good time to do so.

"I'm going to take a bath."

“.....”

Why would she tell him that? At Add’s confused gaze, Eve continued her explanation.

“I confirmed that there’s a river ahead. I already checked the water’s depth so there shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Hamel is called the city of water after all...”

They saw many streams and rivers during their march and he could also confirm with his own eyes the river Eve was talking about.

“Not just Rena and me, Ara will bathe together with us as well.”

“.....So you want me to explain.”

They needed Chung’s permission in order to temporarily get Ara to move around freely. Add understood what Eve meant and nodded. But her words weren’t over yet.

“Then I’ll be counting on you for your part as well.”

“What?”

“I have something for you to attempt on your side as well.”

The words Add told Eve while asking for her help yesterday was returned right back at him. Add somehow felt a bit uneasy..... But Eve looked like she had finished all her calculations.

“Then let’s start.”

Blue river shining from the beautiful moonlight.

Three people had their bodies sunk inside the flowing river and were bathing carefully.

Such a light skin that would make even the pearl jealous. A drop of water made its way down the neck and made a beautiful curve as it slid down all the way to the navel.

“Ah, it’s so refreshing!”

“.....”

“.....”

Add and Chung didn’t show any reaction to Elsword’s shout. There was nothing to say when the three of them were bathing together stark naked.

“.....Thank you for inviting me, Mr.Add.”

“.....Just call me Add, it’s easier for me that way.”

Chung thanked reluctantly and Add felt reluctant as well. Even though they were all same genders, bathing together with someone else was uncomfortable for him.

Elsword seemed to have done this couple times and didn’t look like he minded at all.

“Phew.....”

Add scratched his head as he stole a look at Chung. Even though he looked like a girl, he was clearly a guy.

‘While I’m bathing with Ara Haan, you bathe together with Chung as well.’

Eve gave that condition before leaving without any more explanation.

Add had called Elsword also because it would be awkward to bathe 1 on 1 with Chung..... But Elsword was smiling enjoyably without caring about the two of them.

“Aren’t two of you going to wash?”

“.....We should.”

The water was quite deep further inside and reached all the way to the stomach. While being cautious of his steps, Add examined Chung’s mood.

While this situation was awkward..... He couldn’t stay silent till the end.

“I heard that it gets colder the more you approach the Temple of Water and the Temple itself is covered by snow. Why is that?”

“I’m not sure as well. It seems there’s some kind of legend that’s passed down about it....”

Elsword who was washing his face joined in abruptly.

“You mean the legend about the Priestess of Water right?”

“Do you know something about this?”

“I heard from the other knights. Apparently some demon kidnapped the Priestess of Water who knew about secret of the world. Then they fell in love with each other.”

Add frowned.

“What a cliché legend. Let me guess, their love didn’t work out and the temple was frozen because of that?”

“Well, putting aside the legend, it is true that the temple is frozen. It will pose difficulties during the battle.”

“Having many soldiers doesn’t matter at all. Only people who’ll be useful during the fight with Ran are us.”

Chung carefully nodded and agreed to Add’s cold-hearted evaluation. He was polite yet cool-headed.

“Yes, pardon my words but the others will only get caught up during the battle. Sir Penensio has to take care of the soldiers while we attack Ran.”

Chung must have admitted that the El Search Party was an important fighting asset as well.

Add thought that the conversation was flowing favorably so he began to look for a good timing. Could he possibly ask him to free Ara if things went well?

But Elsword who was listening to the two of them suddenly changed the topic.

“I was having doubts, but Chung is a guy after all.”

“.....O, of course I am.”

“I thought for sure that you’re a girl when I first saw you.”

Chung’s face got heated red at the words Elsword spoke without much thought.

“Please don’t make fun of me, Elsword.”

“But your hair is long and your skin is so light.”

“Even so, I’m a guy.”

Add didn’t know when the two have become so friendly with each other, but Chung and Elsword were having a friendly chat right now. Although it was a random conversation, Chung’s expression looked like it was brightening and Add used this chance to slip a word in.

“There’s not enough people for our fight with Ran.”

“.....So you’re trying to tell me to free Ara Haan.”

Chung’s eyes sharpened soon as he understood the meaning behind Add’s words. Add purposely laughed as if to tell Chung to listen up.

“She’s been in charge of our front line during all our fights. You don’t specialize in close quarter combat either right?”

“I’m sorry to say this but there’s no guarantee that she won’t turn her spear against us. Or she could turn on us when we face Ran.”

“You have to bring her in front of Ran anyways if you’re going to use her as a hostage. And she can betray any time if she really wanted. Do you honestly think that puny chain can tie her down?”

“That’s a sign of trust. A sign that I’ll also treat Ara Hann with respect long as she doesn’t break it.”

Their opinions clashed tightly. Actually, Add had been expecting this kind of result..... That’s why he hadn’t asked Chung to free Ara before. Also, what Chung was saying was obvious considering his position as Hamel’s lord.

Add had been planning to respect Chung’s methods but he couldn’t hold back anymore since Ara’s consciousness was in danger now.

“You should already know by now that she’s innocent.”

“.....”

Chung didn’t answer and instead let out a heavy sigh. At first, Chung had reacted out of passion after hearing that she was Ran’s sister. But he stopped acting out of emotions after he actually got a chance to speak with Ara.

“Is our request really that unreasonable?”

“She’s trying to turn Ran back saying he was once a human. Are you saying I should accept the circumstances of my father’s killer?”

In the end, none of them could yield in this part. Ara who was trying to turn Ran back into Aren and Chung who was trying to get revenge. The two of their goals couldn’t be accomplished at the same time.

But Add already knew this.

“That’s something to think about later. I’m pointing out that we don’t have enough strength to take Ran on right now. The burden is too heavy for Elsword alone.”

“I’ll try my best. But I do find it more reassuring with Big Sister Ara by my side.”

Elsword who had been examining the ring on his finger read Add’s intentions and also joined in to help. Chung didn’t look like he had any words for rebuttal.

It was always better to have more helping hands. It was a reasonable request.

“.....I’ll think about it a bit more.”

“I’d like you to hurry. There isn’t much time left.”



Actually, having the conversation progress this far was a great accomplishment already.

Chung was currently acting very mature and reasonably. Add also thought highly of Chung's polite actions and didn't want to urge him any more than this.

Eve probably pushed Add to bathe together with Chung in order to get him to try talking with Chung privately. Well, it was about half successful.

"Then we are all going fight together right?"

Elsword spoke abruptly as he stretched out his arm to put it around Add's neck. Add frowned instinctively at this sudden skinship but Elsword didn't mind it as he put his other arm around Chung's neck.

Elsword smiled as he looked up towards the night sky.

"Let's win this time."

It was a voice attempting to shake off sorrow and regret. Add stopped trying to shake off Elsword's arm and replied with a snort.

"We'll obviously win without you having to say it."

"I'll do my best as well."

Chung's tight expression was loosened and he was smiling slightly.

That's right, we lost last time.

But let's win this time.

Making this kind of resolution while bathing felt like a joke.... But Add couldn't help but to laugh because he found it mysterious that their hearts were one.



Eve was looking up towards the moon then lowered her gaze. Ara and Rena were washing their bodies a little further away.

The three of them were finally together after a long time but only silence dwelled between them. Normally when the three of them were together, Rena would take the lead so that the conversation wouldn't stop even for a moment. But that wasn't the case this time.

"The river's temperature is adequate."

"Yea, I think so too. How about you Ara?"

".....It's fine."

Ara nodded slightly to Eve's evaluation and Rena's question. Feeling anxious, Rena who was watching over the two wanted to say something but she suppressed the urge.

Eve making a suggestion for them to bathe together was a very surprising change. Eve was a Nasod and she didn't need to bathe like humans. They had all bathed together before but that was just Eve tagging along because Rena had offered strongly.

Eve prepared this occasion on her own right now to talk with Ara.

'You can do it, Eve.'

Rena internally cheered Eve on. She was so proud of Eve who was right now trying to handle emotions that she couldn't understand. Rena wanted to help but she couldn't intervene.

Rena watched over Eve feeling like a mother watching over her child who's just started their first steps.

"Ara Haan, how was your days in prison?"

"....."

Such a frank conversation opener made Rena want to intervene but she restrained herself. She must restrain herself.

Thankfully, despite going through bad experiences recently, Ara temperament hadn't changed so she took Eve's words literally.

"It wasn't bad because of Mr.Chung's thoughtful measures. How have you been Ms.Eve?"

"There wasn't anything particular for me."

Silence continued after the normal daily conversation ended. Eve continued to stare straightly at Ara and Ara lowered her head and avoided Eve's gaze as if she was feeling guilty.

Just when Rena's patience finally ran out and she was about to open her mouth while thinking that it couldn't be helped, Eve suddenly moved her hand to splash the river water on Ara.

"Kyah?! M, Ms.Eve?"

"....."

Eve continued to splash water on Ara without answering. Flustered, Ara covered her face with her arm then stared at Rena. Ara's gaze was as if she was asking Rena if she did something wrong.

When Ara continued to only defend, Eve stopped splashing water on her.

"Why aren't you countering?"

"Umm, I was wondering if I made Ms.Eve angry somehow....."

"I'm not angry. We did this last time too."

Seeing that Ara was confused, Eve explained calmly.

"Don't you remember? Back in Ruben."

"Ah....."

It was something that happened when Rena, Ara and Eve were bathing together after they had defeated the Nasod miners.

What Eve was asking her to recall was the time when Rena had suggested they should bathe together to loosen their distant atmospheres. And while bathing, they had a playful game of splashing water on each other.

"That's when Mr.Add appeared all of a sudden."

"You don't have to remember that part."

Eve cut her off abruptly. Ara cowered and looked nervously at Eve again. Seeing this, Eve splashed water on Ara again.

"M, Ms.Eve!"

"You can fight back if you don't like it."

Eve started ruthlessly splashing water on Ara. Then Rena who was watching over them gracefully struck the water's surface. Then, a small wave splashed up towards Eve's head.

"Just watching is boring so I'll join in."

"I won't go easy."

“Yea, of course. Then here’s one for Ara also to be fair~”

Ara was now completely cornered when even Rena who she thought would help started splashing water on her as well. When Ara continued to only block with her two arms, Rena and Eve stopped their attacks and waved towards Ara.

“Come, Ara.”

“How long are you going to just stand there?”

“.....Uuu.”

When Ara still hesitated despite their urge, Rena lightly struck the water’s surface again. Ara quickly raised one of her arm to block the incoming drops of water then scooped up water with her other hand to throw it towards Rena.

But Rena had already predicted this and dodged quickly so Eve who was behind her got hit instead.

“Ah.....”

“Let’s continue.”

Eve didn’t react and splashed water on Ara again. Still nervous, Ara carefully made counterattacks against Eve and Rena.

There were almost no words that went between them as they continued to splash water on each other. Amazingly, Ara could feel her complex and tangled mind start to clear slightly as she moved her body.

Her movements slowly got bolder and amount of water she splashed increased. Whenever Ara’s hand swiped across the river, a huge wave rushed towards Rena and Eve.

Just moving without thinking about anything lightened her mind.

“Hyaaah!”

A wave much bigger than those before was created when Ara struck the water’s surface with her palm again. Ara had done this in spur of the moment so she got surprised by what she just did. But Eve and Rena who just got soaked lightly shook their heads.

Drops of water shined brightly from the moonlight.

“Ahahaha, this is very refreshing.”

“Not too bad. Then here I come too.”

After that, Rena displayed a skill of cutting across the water current to splash water on them, and Eve displayed a method of using Moby and Reby to scoop up water and dropping it on their heads.

It was just a light game where they splashed water on each other, but the sound of laughter didn't cease. Then Ara realized that the laughter wasn't just Rena's. She was also laughing before she had realized it.

And this felt so surreal that Ara stroked her own face. How long has it been since she had laughed like this?

When Ara stood numbly, Eve asked.

"Do you require help, Ara Haan?"

".....Pardon me?"

"I'll help you if you require it."

Eve spoke hesitant and slowly as if she was trying to organize something inside her.

"I've heard about the circumstances you are facing. I'm not too knowledgeable about human emotions but I know that you are facing a very difficult situation."

"....."

Ara stood still and blinked at these unexpected words. For Ara, Eve had been a party member who was very pretty and yet was a bit hard to face. Eve was always cold and objective so Ara felt that she shouldn't make any mistakes in front of her. But this in turn made her more nervous and lead to her to making more mistakes in front of her.

Of course, this wasn't Eve's fault. It was just one of the reasons why she felt uneasy around Eve. Also, Eve wasn't too sociable so the two of their relationship had been dry up till now.

"Ms.Eve..... for me?"

"I may not look it, but I'm the Queen of Nasods. I can help you."

"One who said we should bathe together was Eve as well."

Ara got surprised at Rena's words and stared at Eve again. Ara's heart felt like it was warming up.

Then she recalled that Eve was still waiting for an answer so she made a quick bow.

"No, I already troubled you enough with my problem. I cannot trouble you anymore."

"Then are you saying you don't need my help?"

Ara didn't know how she should answer. She asked carefully.

".....Why is Ms.Eve trying to help me?"





It was just a light game where they splashed water on each other, but the sound of laughter didn't cease.

“I’m not sure either.”

Eve answered sharply then slowly closed her eyes.

“I don’t know why, but it felt like I had to. I’m sorry, I must have said something unnecessary when you didn’t require any help.”

“No, that’s not true. I’m happy that Ms.Eve wants to help me.”

When Ara got flustered and shook her head, Eve went back to her original question.

“Then what should I help you with?”

“That’s.....”

Back to point one. Rena made a long sigh then stretched out her hand to playfully pinch Ara’s cheek.

“M, Ms.Rena?”

“Ara, I know things are very difficult for you right now. So can’t we be of any strength to you? .....Is what Eve is asking.”

“That sounds a bit different, Rena.”

When Rena let go of her cheek, Ara rubbed the part of her face that got pulled. Then she slowly lowered her head.

“Thank you for asking, but.....”

“It seems you are worried about something that we don’t know about. Can’t you tell us?”

“.....”

Ara closed her mouth. What she was worried about was a very complicated issue. At first, it was a problem with Ran and Chung.... But it became much more complicated after she met Karis again.

She couldn’t confess that she was having strange nightmares about her comrades dying every night. Especially when they were heading to a fight right now.

Revealing it to Add couldn’t be helped because of Eun. But Add promised to keep this a secret and it looked like he was keeping it.... She couldn’t tell such an ominous story to the others as well.

Ara swallowed her words and forced a smile.

“That’s not it. It’s just that what Elder Brother did was so horrible..... I don’t know what to do.”

“I see.”

“Yes, alright.....”



Rena sighed then grabbed Ara's hand tightly.

"It's very.....difficult for you now, right?"

"....."

When Ara couldn't answer, Rena whispered gently as if she was singing.

"Everything will work out when this fight is over. It will be for sure."

".....Yes."

Listening to Rena made her feel like it really will be. Ara was nodding then her face suddenly stiffened.

Ara quickly looked around then bowed.

"I, I'll head back first now! Two of you can take your time."

"You should dry up before leaving."

Ara hurriedly spoke her parting words then left the two behind. The bloody visions she's been seeing recently, those glimpses had flashed by in her mind again.

It's only a dream. It won't actually come true right?

Ara moved swiftly while trying to control her restless heart.

Ara left. Rena sighed at how Ara had left almost as if she was running away.

"Did I speak too irresponsibly.....?"

"I judge that it was an appropriate advice."

Rena smiled at Eve's rigid evaluation then asked.

"Come to think of it Eve. You seem to be very caring towards Ara recently. Did something happen between you two?"

"There was no such event."

When Rena continued to smile, Eve must have felt slightly embarrassed so she turned to avoid her gaze.

".....I just thought that I shouldn't leave her alone like that."

"Yea, that's right."

Actually, Eve had the tendency of distancing herself from the El Search Party. The one who was visibly most distanced was Add, but that was because of his thought processes and his actions.....and he seemed to be somewhat integrating recently.

On the other hand, while Eve cared extremely about Elsword, she treated the other members from a step further away. In human terms, she had a very picky and introverted personality. Of course, Eve was a Nasod so comparing her to humans didn't quite fit.

"Everyone went through a lot during the fight in Velder."

".....Yes."

Rena's voice also became lower. The El Search Party was almost annihilated in their fight with Elesis, and everything would have been over if Aisha hadn't intervened.

That defeat still lingered within everyone as a wound.

"I sometimes regret that it was because my strength wasn't enough. That my firepower wasn't sufficient compared to your rear support."

"No, Eve you tried you best."

"I tried my best and still lost."

Eve's voice was quite seeped with emotion. She hadn't let it show before, but Eve must have been quite dejected about that defeat as well.

".....I don't want to lose next time."

"Yes....."

"I want to become stronger and be of help to Elsword and the others."

"....."

Rena felt regretful as to why it was only her who was listening to these words right now. How wonderful would it have been if the others could have listened to this as well?

Eve who hadn't known how to associate with people now started to take the initiative and care about others.

It was a remarkable change.

"Rena, it's stifling."

Before she knew it, Rena had pulled Eve in her arms and was patting her. Eve slightly had an expression as if she was feeling cramped but she didn't push Rena away.

“It’s alright Eve. You don’t have to feel impatient. You can become stronger while being together with everyone.”

“.....together?”

“Yea, me, Elsword, Ara and Add, we will always be together with you.”

At Rena’s whisper, Eve continued her words quietly.

“.....So I’m not alone.”

“Yes.”

At this gentle answer, Eve hesitated then tried to embrace Rena. But at that moment, sound of an explosion and a roar tore across the sky.

Gwwwoooooh!!

“.....Looks like we got visitors.”

“Let’s hurry and check it out.”

Rena’s eyes sharpened and Eve also turned around without hesitation.

Not a sound could be heard.

Without even drying her hair properly, Ara reached the camp with such swift steps that she almost looked like she was flying. Ara breathed a sigh of relief when she realized that nothing was wrong. She had seen a glimpse of a giant shadow rampaging through and attacking the Velder Knights..... But she must have been mistaken.

“Thank goodness.”

Ara eased her mind then delved into her thoughts while slowly strolling around the camp. She recalled the talk she had while bathing with everyone.

She was so thankful of how Rena cared for her and how Eve was worrying for her that she didn’t know what to say.

Even now she wanted to confess everything to them..... But what use would that be?

“Lord Eun, are you there?”

‘Yes, I’m listening. The air is fresh tonight.’

Eun replied softly to Ara’s call. Ara determined herself and asked to confirm what she already knew.

“The events I’ve been seeing in my dreams.... Is it true that they could actually come true?”

‘Future isn’t unchangeable and is determined by actions of the present. My eyes can see much further than others and since you’ve also spent quite a bit of time together with me, you’ve also somewhat become able to see as well. It’s an ability called foresight.’

The horrifying visions Ara has been seeing in her dreams past couple of days...

Eve being destroyed by Shadow Master in Elder, Elsword falling before Elesis’ blade, Rena trying to protect the other members then falling to a dark elf’s ambush.

And Add being killed by Karis.

Even though they were only dreams, they felt so vivid and horrible....so she almost didn’t get any sleep recently. It was to the point where she was too scared to close her eyes.

Ara stopped her steps then asked desperately while looking up at the moon.

“.....What should I do then? What did you do in times like this Lord Eun?”

‘It’s now become a part of my daily life so I don’t have much to tell you. Life of a warrior is like dancing on top of a blade, you should already know that death can come at any moment.’

“But.....”

If someone else was to see Ara right now it would look like she was talking to herself. Ara sadly shook her head. Eun had always been together with her and gave her many advices but she tended to be harsh sometimes.

Ara had always taken Eun’s harsh advices to heart but the situation was different this time.

“Still, I can’t let such a thing happen! It’s because I’m not strong enough.....”

‘One cannot protect everything no matter how strong one becomes. This might sound cruel.... But I also have many things that I failed to protect.’

“.....”

Ara bit her lower lips in frustration at Eun’s lecturing tone.

Ara was able to survive Karis and Ran’s attack on her village thanks to Eun. But all the people in her village were killed.... Ara was the sole survivor from that bloodbath.

‘No matter how strong you become..... You cannot change fate.’

“I don’t want to change something like that. I just want to stop the events I’ve been seeing if they actually have a chance of happening. I don’t want such things to come true!”

‘Even so.....’

Eun didn’t continue her words anymore. Instead, sound of heavy armor moving was heard then someone else spoke to her.

“What are you doing alone here Ara Haan?”

“Ah.....”

It was a voice that she got to hear often these past couple of days. Ara got extremely startled as she stopped her conversation with Eun and turn around. A boy in white armor was staring at Ara.

It was Chung who returned after his bath with Add.

“Didn’t you promise earlier? That you’ll move about freely only when you’re bathing.”

“.....I’m sorry. I was deep in thought and forgot for a moment.”

Chung made a troubled expression when Ara bowed her head politely to apologize. Chung looked around the surrounding area for a moment to confirm that no one else was around then spoke quietly.

“I’m sorry if my words sounded harsh. Please return to the carriage now.”

“Oka.....”

Ara realized that complying with Chung wasn’t what she wanted to say right now.

She understood very well why Chung was doing this. But waiting without a spear in her hand made her mind too restless and anxious.

She was a mess right now.....to the point where everyone else was worried about her.

That was obvious. Ara Haan is a martial artist. She always solved her unrest and problems through martial arts. There was no way she could ease her mind.....from just waiting quietly without a spear in her hand.

Ara took a deep breath then spoke the words she should have said before.

“Mr.Chung, I won’t ask you to trust me. It’s an excessive request after all.”

“That’s.....”

“But can you let me fight together as well?”

Just when Chung was about to respond to Ara’s words.... A sound of people screaming and a roar tearing through the darkness was heard.

Gwwwoooooh!!

“.....We'll talk about this later. Your weapon is over here!”

“Yes!!”

Chung quickly turned around to run and Ara followed his back without any doubt.

Add was looking over the map in the commander's tent when the tearing roar was heard. Add instantly flew up on his Dynamos and swiftly headed North where the sound came from.

Dark shadow form was attacking by swinging its arm. Velder Knights were too shocked by its 3 storeys high size that they were hesitating.

“Shadow Master?”

A demon that made Add despair, it was his hated enemy from Elder. An enemy he should have faced with caution in the past. But Add snorted and threw a Void Impact.

Booom!!

Space tore then a giant hole was created in the center of Shadow Master's chest. Shadow Master's body shook from receiving a hole that would have killed any normal creature.

“Did you really think I'll get startled from something like this now?”

Thanks to the formula revamp that Aisha told him, efficiency of Add's attacks had improved greatly. His mental ability to manipulate the Dynamos had improved as well so he could take down a Shadow Master by himself easily.

After filling the hole in its chest as if clay was being molded, Shadow Master looked up at Add. Then a Shadow Sniper started to sprout from the Shadow Master's shadow. It was a bizarre way to make an entrance but Add didn't get startled and waved his arm.

Boom!

Space exploded and the newly born Shadow Snipers rolled on the floor. Shadow Snipers were the correct choice for attacking Add who was in the air. But that was only when they could withstand Add's attacks.

“It's way too simple.”

It was not a bad choice to ambush them with a Shadow Master..... But even Add alone could handle this much. Could it be that Ran didn't know about the El Search Party's skills?

Add was about to launch another Void Impact with an indifferent expression.... When Shadow Chargers that got born from Shadow Master's shadow charged into the Velder Knights that were still terrified. Velder Knights were still frightened from the Shadow Master's size and were frozen still.

Add clicked his tongue and made a sharp dive down to open up a Void Field to tie down the Shadow Chargers' in middle of their charge.

"Back out quickly!"

"Ugh...."

"We're sorry!"

Velder Knight members were apologizing as they slowly backed out. They weren't at least bad since they distanced themselves while keeping their formation.

"Well.... It's kind of understandable."

Add laughed slightly and shook his head. He couldn't blame the Velder Knights for being scared of Shadow Master. Wasn't it an enemy that even Add struggled so much against before?

Velder Knights probably had enough ability to take down Shadow Chargers or Snipers.... But Shadow Master was too much for them.

"Back off and observe. I'll finish this quickly."

Add declared lightly then closed the Void Field as he blew up the now free Shadow Chargers with a Void Double Impact. Shadow Chargers got caught up by the space explosion and shattered into pieces.... Then the pieces turned into a murky dark liquid then went back into Shadow Master's shadow.

"It's different than before."

Shadow Master in Elder had appeared together with its minions through the dimension gate....it didn't have an ability to create minions on the spot.

Although it hadn't changed in appearance, it had a new ability.

Not only that....

Gwooooooh!!

A tearing roar was heard from far away. The ambush was happening not only in one location but in multiple other locations as well.

Shadow Master in front of him wasn't their only enemy. Add realized this and made an idle remark while letting out a laugh.

"Kukukuk, you're making this quite enjoyable."

There wasn't a reason to be worried at all. The other El Search Party members should be fighting right now as well.

"But.... just in case, it would be troublesome if something happened to Eve."

Add withdrew his laugh and glared at the Shadow Master coldly.

"And I've never liked you from the start. I'll make sure to destroy you fast as I can."

It was a dark night. Sound of battle and screams of demons from all over the place was creating a terrifying atmosphere. But Eve was objectively facing a Shadow Master by herself.

Boooooom!

Explosion Impact detonated as Shadow Chargers got launched up towards the air and got destroyed. But they instantly turned into dark liquids then got absorbed into their origin shadow and were reborn again.

"So it won't end unless the source is destroyed."

Minion demons will be reborn infinitely unless Shadow Master was defeated. Eve launched a missile towards Shadow Master but Shadow Defender rose up from its shadow and became a meat shield.

"....."

Dismay rose up in Eve's expression. Shadow Defender was obviously destroyed.... But they could be reborn quickly.

These minuscule skills didn't have enough firepower.

She had to use Generate Black Hole or Junk Break to end this in one go.... But Junk Break had a short range so she had to venture getting close, and Generate Black Hole took time to bring forth from the dimension gate and activate.

"No....."

While Eve was hesitating, five Shadow walkers got created and spread out. Eve quickly fired an electron ball to attack Shadow Master.



But Shadow Master didn't even try to dodge and took the electron ball with it body. It was just focusing on spawning minions. Electron ball did do noticeable damage to the Shadow Master's body but the damage was quickly covered up by the shadow.

“.....”

Eve's firepower couldn't keep up with the speed of opponent's regenerative ability and the speed that the minions spawned.

Eve wasn't a battle type Nasod in the first place. She was the Queen of Nasods, one who reigns. She didn't prioritize in abilities to fight head on. Even the battle capabilities she had right now were self enhancements she made while going through various events during her travels with Elsword.

Eve's firepower alone wasn't enough to defeat Shadow Master.

And leaving Shadow Master alone like this would result in endlessly spawning minion demons..... This would endanger the Velder Knights.

Rena went to support the other area. Judging by how Rena or anyone else wasn't coming to support her, they must be facing Shadow Master or demons that are of equal caliber.

Things will get out of control if she didn't defeat this Shadow Master fast as possible.

Eve strengthened her resolve and boldly approached Shadow Master using aerial movement.

Seeing Eve come towards it boldly, Shadow Master attacked her by swinging its arm but Eve dodged easily by moving left and right.

“.....!”

While Shadow Master was shocked by this, Eve approached close enough for Junk Break's effective range and positioned herself to summon the shredder. Junk Break was a double edged sword that ensured tremendous damage but lowered Eve's functionality and immobilized her for a moment after its use.

But just when she was about to bring forth the shredder.... A beam of light flew towards Eve from somewhere and hit her body. Eve noticed this late and changed to defensive posture but she couldn't help but to get hit and pushed back.

“Where did it.....?”

It was an extremely long range sniping. Shadow Sniper that was born somewhere else had noticed its creator's danger and had attacked Eve. Eve realized this and tried to locate the sniper.....But a giant shadow loomed over her.

“Darkness, Death.....”

Shadow Master that hasn't been focusing on attacking Eve directly before was now raising its arm. Eve quickly backed out far as she could....But Shadow Master's attack range was too wide.

Not only that, blue lights were burning inside the surrounding darkness. Shadow Snipers were preparing for their second attack.

“.....”

Danger, just when Eve's face stiffened.... white clothing, a girl with a waving white hair grazed past Eve and dashed forwards boldly.

Ara charged in deeply without even minding how Shadow Master was about to smash its arm down. She made a large stab with her spear to pierce through Shadow Master's center. Shadow Master shook after getting its weak point pierced. It tried to back out quickly.... But Ara who had Celestial Fox state activated closed in and didn't give it any room.

“Careful.”

There were still Shadow Snipers in hiding. Just when Eve was about to inform her, a sound of explosion was heard and Shadow Snipers that were charging their beams screamed as they were destroyed.

Clak!

When Eve turned around, Chung was reloading his Destroyer with a stiff expression.

“I'll handle the snipers. Ms Eve, please focus on supporting Ara Haan.”

“Understood.”

Eve quickly followed after Ara and closed in on Shadow Master.

Ara was dodging all of the Shadow Master's attacks while restlessly stabbing with her spear. Ara's movements had always been fast but right now, she was so swift that even Eve's eyes couldn't keep up with her.

“Haaaaaah!!”

“Uuuuugh!”

She was a tiger that broke out of her cage. Shadow Master couldn't withstand the torrent of Ara's attacks so it swung its arm to scatter Dark Fire orbs all over the place. It also created five Shadow Chargers at the same time.

“Ah.....”

She had to quickly destroy the Dark fire orbs because they explode if left alone. But Shadow Chargers were getting in her way.....

“Ara Haan, continue attacking.”

At Eve’s instruction, Ara instantly threw away all her doubts and rushed in towards Shadow Master again. A large portion of Shadow Master’s body was torn off when Ara heroically kicked the ground and spun her body to perform the 1<sup>st</sup> stance of her Dragon Fang art. Only problem left was Dark Fire orbs and Shadow Chargers.

“Generate Black Hole!”

Nasod Weapon appeared through the dimension gate at Eve’s command and created a gravity orb to gather all of the Shadow Chargers and tore them apart. It even cleanly destroyed the Dark Fire orbs in the vicinity.

But there were still some orbs that weren’t taken care of by the Generate Black Hole.... Eve was about to quickly run over and take care of them but the sound of an explosion was faster. Chung had noticed Eve’s plan and fired cannonballs to destroy the orbs.

Dark Fire orbs were destroyed without a trace from the consecutive cannonballs that Chung fired. And....

“Blast!!”

Thanks to Eve and Chung taking care of other problems, Ara was able to focus only on Shadow Master and was able to completely perform her Dragon Fang art. Ara rose up high into the night sky and swung her spear sharply as she fell to split Shadow Master in half.

Crash!!

As her spear struck the ground, earth shattered and shook as if there was an earthquake. Poof! Shadow Master’s body that was waving blew up with a strange noise.

“Phew.....”

Just when Ara was withdrawing her spear that was stuck on the ground, Eve approached and confirmed the situation.

“Shadow Master’s destruction is confirmed.”

“Thank you for your help, Ms.Eve.”

“Not at all. It was me who received help instead.”

“That’s not true! I would have gotten startled and would have been in danger if Ms.Eve didn’t help.”

Eve made a tired sigh then shook her head when Ara continued to deny.

“What an odd persistence. Let’s just say we helped each other.”

“Yes!”

Ara smiled joyously. Eve turned her gaze backwards. Chung was approaching after reloading his Destroyer.

“It looks like demons appeared all over the place. Let’s hurry up and go support other locations.”

“Will you guarantee Ara Haan’s freedom from now on as well?”

It was an extremely sharp question for Eve who wasn’t very knowledgeable about worldly affairs. This was an emergency situation; they needed every fighter they could get. That’s why Chung freed Ara and returned her spear.

Eve was requesting Chung to treat Ara like this from now on as well.

Chung and Eve’s gazes met. Ara realized late what Eve was trying to say and quickly waved her hands.

“No, Ms.Eve. I’m fine with it so you don’t have to worry.”

“I’m not fine with it.”

“Huh?”

Eve ignored Ara’s reaction and stared at Chung to request again.

“I cannot accept you trying to restrain Ara Haan when you’ve seen her performance right now.”

“.....That’s true.”

Chung made a long sigh then nodded. Then he bowed her head towards Ara.

“As Hamel’s temporary lord, I apologize for my rudeness up till now.”

“N, Not at all. I- as well....”

“I’d like you to help us on our way to Temple of Water. We’ll talk about what comes after at that time.”

Ara quickly nodded.

Chung and Ara’s opinions on Ran’s treatment couldn’t help but to clash. But right now was the time to join their strengths and break through the obstacles that stood in front of them. Chung was suggesting that they should postpone the discussion about Ran’s treatment until later time.

“Thank you, Mr.Chung.”

“Not at all. Actually... I'm the one who's sorry.”

Chung was honestly sorry. Actually, Ara had done nothing wrong except for the fact that she was Ran's younger sister. Chung had first thought she'd be dangerous because she was sister of an evil demon. That's why he tried to restrain her and use her as a hostage. But after actually talking and observing her, he realized that she wasn't that kind of person at all.

Before they had left Hamel, it was better to keep her in prison for the sake of keeping her hidden. But that wasn't the case right now. But even if his personal opinion was leaning towards releasing her, he couldn't decide easily as someone who represented Hamel. That's why he had accepted Add's request but drew the line before.

Chung's mind had been very troubled about Ara's treatment as well. But now, he had an excuse to free Ara and a reason to fight together with her. This was rather a welcoming turn of events for Chung.

Chung held out his hand first and Ara also carefully held out hers and they shook hands.

No matter what happens later, they had decided to fight together by trusting and depending on each other at least until the Temple of Water.

“That looks dangerous.”

While the two of them were confirming each other's will.....Eve was looking above towards the far off sky. Ara and Chung also looked towards the direction where Eve was looking and blinked blankly.

Shadow Walkers, Chargers, Defenders and Snipers all turned into dark mucus like liquid when they were destroyed and then regenerated.

Then what happens when..... Shadow Master was destroyed?

“Darkness, Destruction.....”

Not just the Shadow Master here, but the ones that were destroyed by Add, Rena and Elsword also admitted after turning into a dark liquid. They couldn't defeat their enemy in their current forms.

Then they had to join together.

“Death!”

Body 3 times bigger than normal Shadow Master, a monster with 3 heads and six arms roared towards the sky.

It was a form so large that it was covering up the moon. People that looked up towards this giant shadow were all frozen and couldn't say anything.

Giant shadow that could destroy multiple buildings just from swinging its arm.

"M, monster....."

"Y, you're telling us to fight this?"

Even the Velder Knights were in state of panic and were wavering. They were all brave warriors that had protected Hamel from attack of the Shadow demons.....but Shadow Master in front of them was in a whole different dimension.

You could tell from a single glance that this colossus which stood easily taller than 13 meters was literally a disaster incarnate. It instilled fear in humans just from them looking at it. All they could do was to stare at it with their jaws wide open.

Demon of demons that normal humans wouldn't dare to face, it was a monster of monsters.....but there were those that stepped forwards to face this giant demon.

"It's really big. Where's its weakness?"

"It's too tall."

"We'll just have to focus our fire on it."

"Is everyone alright?"

"Guys, are any one of you hurt?"

The El Search Party, and a cold voice that finished things up at the end.

"Hmph, there's no need to be afraid. Just tell all the people that might get in the way to back off."

Add glared at the colossal demon while wiping the dust off his hand. He had originally thought they were launching a simple multi pronged attack but they apparently had a hidden trick like this.

Hearing Add's words, the El Search Party all looked towards him. Their gaze seemed to be telling him to explain the plan to them already. So Add quickly formulated a plan.

"Chung and Rena support from the back, Ara and Elsword go up front. I'll support the front line from the air and Eve will do the same from the ground. It looks like more demons will pop up from the Chaos Shadow's shadow. Eve and I will take care of those, Rena will cover us if our firepower isn't enough. If it starts scattering Dark Fire orbs, Chung will get rid of them the best he can and others also support him depending on your positions."

“Alright let’s go!”

Elsword grabbed his sword then immediately dash forwards. Ara got surprised and looked back and forth between Add and Elsword. When Add gestured with his chin telling her to go ahead she bowed and dashed forwards. Add snorted then asked Chung who was reloading his Destroyer.

“So is your mind settled now?”

“It’s not right to accuse her of the wrongs done to Hamel.”

Chung calmly shook his head. Add was satisfied with that answer.

“Then I’ll be counting on you.”

“Yes, I’ll be as well.”

Chung nodded then took up his position together with Rena. Penensio was arranging the Velder Knights and having them evacuate to the back.

“Kukukuk, good. Then let’s get rid of this small fry.”

Add laughed joyously as he got on the Dynamos.

Elsword bravely charged towards Chaos Shadow. Dozens of Shadow Chargers instantly rose up from Chaos Shadow’s shadow but cannonball that Chung fired cleaned them all up.

“Haaaaah!”

Thanks to that, Elsword was able to approach Chaos Shadow and swing his sword. Elsword’s great sword fiercely stuck the shadow.

“Huh?”

But the impact felt strange and Chao’s Shadow’s lower body just wavered like a mist. Elsword swung his sword again despite being surprised and Ara who arrived later also made a swift stab but their weapons just passed through Chaos Shadow.

“Is it just a shadow?”

“This is odd.”

It didn’t look like their attacks were dealing damage. When Ara and Elsword stopped their attacks, Shadow Defenders and Chargers rose up from around them.

“Don’t let your guard down.”

Eve arrived a moment after and used her whip to blow away the Shadow demons. But she was just as confused about how Elsword and Ara's attacks weren't working on Chaos Shadow.

"Void..... Impact!"

Add's voice was heard in that moment and Chao Shadow's body wavered again. Of course it recovered instantly with its shadows....but that attack did sure damage.

"So it won't work with normal attacks. Then we'll grab its attention while taking care of the minions."

Eve proposed a reasonable action but Ara quickly shook her head.

"No, we'll support you Ms.Eve. So please quickly....."

"My attacks will work?"

Eve was confused by Ara's suggestion but tried firing an electron ball. Then Chaos Shadow's lower body got shaved off.

Eve was slightly surprised by this and asked Ara.

"How did you know?"

"U, um that's...."

Ara had looked ahead with the foresight ability that Eun talked about to see that not only Add's but Eve's attacks worked as well. When Ara hesitated and couldn't answer, Eve gave up on questioning her.

"Then I'll be counting on you two."

"Alright!"

Normally, Elsword and Ara would be up front and Add and Eve would support them, but the situation was opposite today. Add from the air and Eve from the ground poured their attacks on Chaos Shadow.

Elsword and Ara stayed close beside Eve taking care of the Shadow Chargers and Snipers that continued to appear.

"Void Impact!!"

Add was torturing Chaos Shadow by attacking it ceaselessly. Eve was also mixing up various attacks based mostly around electron balls but....

Her firepower wasn't enough.

The two of their firepower couldn't keep up with Chao Shadow's regenerating speed.



No. Strictly speaking, that was not a correct description. Add's firepower was already sufficient. Chaos Shadow was suffering from Add's literally unending attacks utilizing space explosions, restraints and space distortions. It was to the point where there wasn't even a moment where all of its three heads were all safely intact.

Their problem was.....Eve.

“.....”

Add in the air was performing beyond expectations. He would have blown up dozens of normal Shadow Masters already by himself.

But Chaos Shadow's regenerative method was to supplement its losses from different parts of its body.

Even if Add blew up top of its body, it just had to supplement them from the bottom. If that's the case, they had to destroy the bottom part and not give it any room to regenerate.... But firepower of Eve who was in charge of this was too lacking.

“It's not enough.”

Eve murmured to herself without realizing.

The battle dragging on right now, how it was turning disadvantageous for the El Search Party was because of Eve's lack of firepower. Rena, Chung, Ara and Elsword were all supporting Eve and Add with the best of their abilities already. And Add was already displaying a performance beyond his normal limits... yet Eve was performing below expectations.

It couldn't be helped. She wasn't a battle type Nasod.

“.....”

Eve didn't know how to describe this feeling that was filling up her heart.

So she tried ceaselessly firing electron balls but Chaos Shadow's regenerative speed was far better than the rate that she dealt damage.

“If this goes on.....”

It was foolish to continue battling when their failure was certain. They had to retreat and find another way. Eve's firepower couldn't become the main method of attack for the El Search Party. It was still unknown why Eve's attack worked against Chaos Shadow. But it was more rational choice to look for a way to make Elsword and Ara's attack work instead.

Eve gave up firing electron balls.

“We'll have to retreat. Please get ready.”

“Huh? Are you hurt somewhere Ms.Eve?”

Ara stabbed to throw a Shadow Charger away then looked back towards Eve to ask. The words refused to come out of Eve’s mouth for some reason, but she forcedly opened her mouth.

“I apologize. I can deal damage to this demon but my powers aren’t sufficient to defeat it. Let’s retreat and look for another way.”

“That’s.....”

Ara trailed her words with a regrettable expression. Anyone who fought knew how difficult it was to confess that their strength was lacking.

“Haaah!!”

Elsword blew away three Shadow Defenders in front of him then leaned his sword on his shoulder.

“Eve, will that be okay with you?”

“.....What do you mean?”

“When you were traveling with me.....”

Elsword murmured with a tone as if he was recalling memory from a far past. Eve winced as she stared at Elsword’s back.

“At first, you didn’t know anything. You didn’t even know how to fight.”

“.....”

“But you became stronger quickly. I was honestly very surprised.”

It was a story from when she was traveling alone with Elsword. Eve felt moved by the old memories that suddenly rose up in her head. After meeting this rude red haired boy, she faced the world that she had never seen before.....and she learned offensive abilities while getting caught up in large and small fights that this boy got into.

“But is it really okay for you to quit right now?”

“Mr.Elsword! That’s too.....”

Ara got shocked and reprimanded Elsword but he didn’t look back. His eyes were on the enemy and his sword was in his hands.

He didn’t retreat or give up even when a colossal demon that his attacks didn’t work on was in front of him.

Red haired boy was always like this. He never wavered or got scared even against enemies that were stronger than him. He never gave up. Even when his sister that he admired so much appeared as his enemy, while he suffered and hesitated, he took up his sword and fought her head on in the end.

His unwavering attitude always bothered Eve, it sometimes worried her, and it sometimes....

“Is it really okay for you to give up following me?”

“.....”

Elsword’s words came out of the blue but Eve understood what he meant. She would have normally responded coldly but she couldn’t say a word right now.

Elsword strongly desired to become stronger so that he could be together with Elesis. Eve followed the boy while still being confused about him..... She obtained power to defend herself so that she wouldn’t get caught up in conflicts and ruckus he caused.

But was it only because of that reason?

“I won’t say anything more if that’s what you really want. But.....”

Elsword sprayed his sword to cut 3 Shadow Walkers that were just appearing with just a single swing. His sword created a flash of light and Shadow Walkers all turned back into black liquid.

“I was happy that you followed me in my stubbornness.”

“.....”

Eve didn’t know how to describe this feeling that was filling up her heart right now. Eve pressed down on her heart and stared blankly at Elsword’s back. Her process execution was different than usual. An indescribable feeling came up from her fingertips and made her head numb.

Her feet wouldn’t move. She was concluding that they had to retreat, but it felt like she would lose something really important if she retreated here.

“Watch out, Ms.Eve!”

In that moment, Ara quickly threw her body to push Eve away. Shadow Charger swung its fist as it rose up from behind Eve and struck Ara’s shoulder. Flesh tore and blood splattered, but Ara clenched her teeth and stabbed with her spear to destroy the Shadow Charger.

“.....Are you alright? Ara Haan?”

“It’s fine! This much is nothing!”

Ara replied stoutly but blood was dripping from the extremely deep wound on her shoulder. The impact had also damaged her bones so it looked difficult for her to swing her spear. But Ara forcefully endured the pain and smiled.

Ara held her hand out towards Eve who was kneeling down.

“This much will heal quickly when I fight! Don’t mind me and fight Ms.Eve.”

“.....”

Eve blankly stared at Ara then grabbed the hand she held out towards her to stand up. Ara was smiling then got flustered after remembering how Eve was suggesting that they should retreat.

“Ah, umm.... Should we retreat instead of fighting?”

“I think I can somewhat understand now. No, I actually still don’t understand.”

Eve words were conflicting with one another. They were rare words for a Nasod who was always so logical. But her feelings right now could only be described this way.

Elsword wasn’t saying anything more and was fighting the Shadow demons by spraying his sword. Even during this, he was occasionally trying Spiral Blast and Triple Geyser on the Chaos Shadow trying to find a way to defeat it.

“I’ll admit it. Ara Haan, I was worried about you.”

“Huh? Huh? T, thank you.”

But Eve hadn’t said this expecting compliments. It was just a simple organization of her thoughts.

“I’ll admit it. What this feeling right now is.”

Eve spoke to Elsword while staring at his back. There was no reply from him but it didn’t matter.

The rude red haired boy Eve saw when she had just woken up was still acting however he wanted. The two of them had clashed and fought many times since then. But Eve had still stuck together with him.

Because she wanted to be together with him.

The reason why Eve opposed Ara being imprisoned was simple as well. It was because she didn’t like it. Why didn’t she like it?

Because she wanted to be together with her.

“I see. I think I understand a bit now.”

Eve moved forwards while speaking to herself. Reby and Moby must have sensed Eve's change as well because they started to circle around her.

She understood what this feeling was now.....about why she didn't want to admit right away that she wasn't able to defeat Chaos Shadow.

Because it felt vexing.

She was not a battle purpose Nasod. So it couldn't be helped if her lacking firepower wasn't able to become strength for the El Search Party. She wasn't able to defeat Chaos Shadow so they had to retreat and look for another way.

That was a correct decision, a rational decision. A decision suited for logical Nasods.

But it felt vexing.

There was a boy she wanted to be together with. She now had other people she wanted to be together with as well. Boy and the others believed in her and put their trust in her. They all believed that she could defeat this demon. That's why they were all still holding their ground.

Not being able to measure up to their expectations felt extremely vexing.

Even while always staring pitifully at the boy who was always picking disadvantageous fights so he could become stronger..... Even while always not being able to understand boy's reckless actions of running straight into enemies clearly stronger than him without any fear. Eve had continued to strengthen herself through all of this.

It was under the pretext of self defense..... But she now knew that it wasn't only because of that.

It was because she wanted to be together with the boy and she needed strength in order to do that.

Right now was no different.

Eve looked at Add fighting in the sky, Rena and Chung supporting them from the back, Ara fighting beside her then finally Elsword fighting bravely in front of her without showing any signs of fatigue.

She now had people she wanted to be together with. She wanted the power to protect them, she wanted be of help to them. They all believed in her and she wanted to answer their expectations.

"So this is.....emotion."

As Eve spoke this to herself, a heat rose up in front of Eve. Since when did it come out? The El that Eve had surely stowed away inside her was now afloat in front of her chest.

It was a mysterious El bestowed to her by a powerful magician. But Eve stretched out her hand towards the pink El without a single hint of hesitation.

The heat overcame her. But Eve didn't let go. She just desired to be stronger, she only desired of wanting to answer the others' trust in her.

It such a human like and Nasod like choice.

Flaaassssssh!!

Then through the darkness, through the shadow.....a giant light rose up towards the night sky.

The El Search Party's gazes all naturally turned towards the pillar of light that appeared all of a sudden. Even Chaos Shadow stopped its attack on Add and looked at the pillar of light.

When the light disappeared, a beautiful mechanical doll stood in its place with her eyes closed. Silver hair waving gracefully from the night wind, Add groaned at such an exquisite appearance.

"That's....."

Different hair style and outfit. She was Eve and yet not Eve at the same time. No, she was Eve beyond Eve.

Add stood blankly, forgetting that he was in middle of battle. Everyone else was the same and stopped all their actions.

The person responsible for halting the fight from just her entrance finally opened her eyes.

The one who had been Eve, and is Eve declared coldly towards Chaos Shadow.

"Resistance is futile, surrender yourself."

"Destructio....."

Eve's declaration brought Chaos Shadow to its senses and it and summoned Shadow Chargers. But Eve didn't mind and instructed Add in the air.

"We'll get rid of it at once, Add."

".....Alright!"

Questioning about Eve's change can come after. Sensing that Eve now possessed an enormous power, Add instantly opened a dimension gate above Chaos Shadow's head.

It was something he saved to be used as a deciding move and it was now the time to decide this.

“Stardust Shower!!”

Chaos Shadow screamed as its body shook from downpour of gravity orbs.

Half of Chaos Shadow’s body got destroyed in an instant and it now desperately focused only on regenerating itself. Only two of its enemies could damage it, and only one amongst those two could do any meaningful damage. It would be all over if it can withstand this rain of gravity orbs.

.....Is what Chaos Shadow had thought. But it sensed that something was wrong. Eve approached Chaos Shadow with graceful steps then stretched her arms out towards both sides.

Following her command, countless weapons appeared through the dimension gate.

“Lunatic Scud!!”

Chao Shadow’s body was already broken from the gravity orbs and now focused fire from the numerous Nasod weapons rained down upon its body. Chaos Shadow screamed and twisted its body as it desperately increased its regenerative speed.

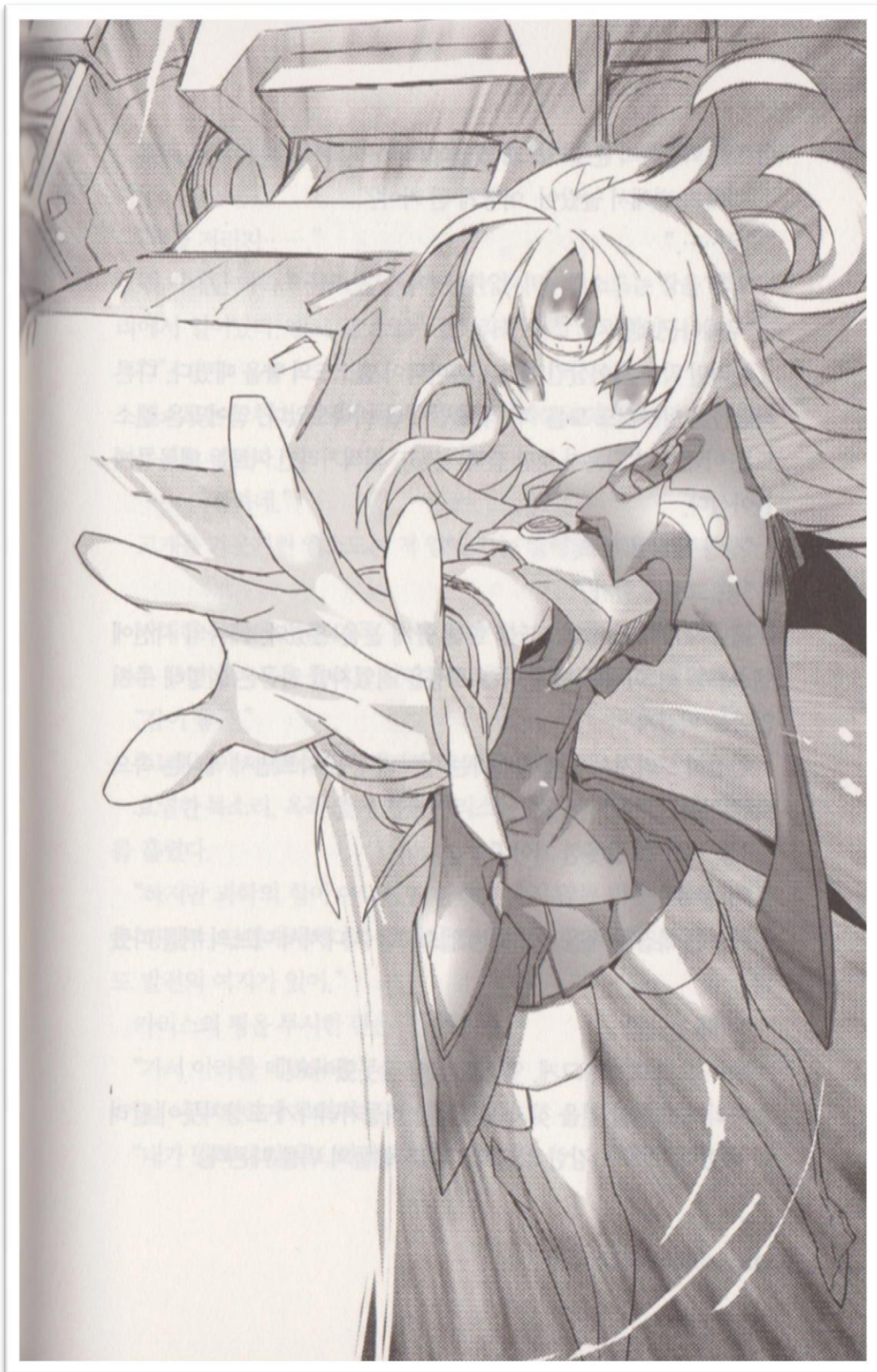
“Kwwooooo!!”

But attacks from the weapons that Eve summoned didn’t cease. Chaos Shadow swung its arm as a last ditch effort but Eve didn’t get startled even for bit and continued to pour weapon fire till the end.

“It’s over now!!”

With Eve’s clear declaration, hundreds of weapon fire consumed Chaos Shadow. There was no place for the shadow to hide in front of such a bright light of intense energy.

Not even a speck of darkness was left behind.





“Situation is over as of now.....”

Eve confirmed the destruction of Chaos Shadow and withdrew all her weapons into the dimension gate. The El Search Party gathered around her. One who came running first was Add but he hesitated from seeing Eve’s different appearance and couldn’t talk to her.

“Eve, are you okay?”

“I’m fine Rena.”

Eve replied lightly when Rena came running after and asked worriedly. Ara and Chung also looked very amazed by how Eve’s appearance had changed all of a sudden.

Elsword also had a same expression as well.

But Eve wanted to say something to Elsword. Something she couldn’t say until now. But it felt like she could say it in this moment.

That’s how she felt.

After inhaling unnecessarily, just when Eve settled her heart and was about to open her mouth, Elsword stretched out his hand abruptly.

“You hair is all fluffy now.”

“.....”

Eve froze from Elsword hand that suddenly stroked her hair without any consent or asking for permission. Others also froze and Add angrily clenched his fists.

But Elsword didn’t mind other people’s reaction and was now stroking Eve’s exterior armor in awe.

“I’m surprised that you changed so suddenly. What happened?”

“How.....”

“How?”

“How rude!!”

After swallowing the words she was about to say, Eve stuck Elsword’s cheek with her palm. Everyone else pretended to ignore this and looked the other way. Elsword who just got hit couldn’t understand and blinked confusedly as Eve turned around coldly fuming from anger.

“Let’s go organize what happened.”

“Yes, let’s do that.”

Rena smiled and sent a graceful eye gesture towards Elsword. Elsword made even more of a confused expression at Rena’s gaze but Rena felt it was fine for her to not explain things to him right now.

Rena smiled internally as she followed Eve who was completely sulking as she walked ahead.

“What? Did I do something wrong?”

“Idiot.”

Add suppressed his complicated feelings and passed by Elsword to follow after Eve.

“Big Sister Ara?”

“.....Uuuu, U, um that’s... Mr.Elsword is in the wrong here!”

Ara looked like she couldn’t find a way to explain it to Elsword and got flustered. She then dashed off as if she was running away. Chung also followed the others with a helpless expression.

While kneeling down, Elsword who got left alone tilted his head as he stroked his cheek.

“Why is everyone acting like that.....”

Well it didn’t matter since they defeated the giant demon. Elsword pushed up on the ground to stand up. Since it’s late into the night he should also help with the cleanup.....

“?”

Elsword felt a strange sensation and turned around to look across the darkness. But there was nothing there.

“.....Strange.”

Elsword tilted his head then followed the group that was walking far ahead.

Demon sitting on a large throne, Ran opened his eyes narrowly. The dark hole opened in front of him showed Elsword walking with his back turned.

“Nice intuition.”

“But he’s still a brat. He won’t even make it here.”

A seductive voice, Karis who was leaning on the throne mocked then let out an exclamation right after.

“But a demon that won’t get damaged by anything other than power of science? That’s a whole new level. While it does have a drawback of becoming a single entity and having a shortened lifespan... As I thought, demons have room for improvement as well.”

Ran ignored Karis’ evaluation and ordered her.

“Go bring Ara.”

“Aren’t you ordering me around too easily?”

“Weren’t you going to do it anyways without me asking?”

“Hmph.”

Karis stuck out her tongue as if she got found out. Her appearance was mature and seductive yet she oddly had a playful and sociable side to her.

But that playful side of her was what led to her toying with her opponents then killing them brutally.

“Since I’m going anyways should I kill them all? Ah, I can’t. I’ll get scolded by lord D if I did that. I’ll have to kill moderately. Moderately.”

“.....”

When Ran ignored her, Karis looked bored then she disappeared through the dimension gate while muttering.

Ran’s gaze after being left by himself lingered in midair. After looking up for a while, Ran suddenly stretched out his arm..... But obviously nothing came into his grasp.

After grasping the empty air, Ran murmured bitterly.

“Sasha.....”

Ran quietly called the name that no one knew about then lowered his arm and closed his eyes.

The end of time was approaching.

### 3. Darkness Strikes

Ancient Waterway.

Subjugation army marched through the waterway that leads to temple of water. Add had it physically easiest during the march. His Dynamo did all the movement for him so he didn't need to waste physical strength walking like the others.

But Add's mind was very distressed right now. His gaze was solely focused on Eve's back as she walked far ahead of him.

"Are you worried about Eve?"

Add got surprised and jumped to the side when Rena silently approached beside him to ask. Rena smiled beamingly.

"Her appearance changed all of a sudden after all. I was very surprised too. She said nothing was wrong after her self examination though so I'm glad."

"We've already seen something like this before."

Rena nodded. Elesis who had been all worn out suddenly grew up as if she had accelerated her own time then displayed an overwhelming power.

Eve's abrupt change in appearance was also explainable if you determined that these two events had the same principles.

"Ah, why didn't I get that El from Aisha? Thinking about it makes me kind of sad."

Rena said this then shot an arrow forward without even properly looking at where she was shooting. Then a scream was heard as shadow sniper hiding up on the high ground fell down.

"Wow....."

"She did it again."

Velder knights whispered amongst each other and were each stealing glances of admiration towards Rena.

Demons were hidden for ambush in various places but they were all cleaned up soon as Rena spotted them and fired an arrow. Subjugation army could move forward without any trouble thanks to her.

"Your current skills should be more than enough."

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Rena's skill with the bow was godly. Even Add honestly didn't have much confidence that he could defeat Rena in a direct confrontation.

Most of all, it felt like Rena has never revealed her true skills yet.

"Yes, that also makes sense. And others will become stronger too."

"....."

"So you don't have to be so restless Add."

Rena's kind words made Add frown.

That night when Add witnessed Eve's growth, he took the El Aisha gave him in his hand and made various attempts but didn't get any changes. Rena must have seen through him doing this.

"Add you are definitely strong and reliable."

"Don't say something useless. I just wanted to figure out how it worked."

"Yes, alright."

Rena answered indifferently then moved forwards. Add sighed after seeing Rena approach Eve then touched the El he stored in his pocket.

The fact that you could obtain explosive power if you handled this El properly was confirmed. The problem was its method of activation. Add tried researching it in various angles along the lines of not breaking it. But he couldn't figure out its activation mechanism at all.

"I can't understand this magic thing at all."

His desire to find out how this El worked was to the point where he wanted drag Aisha here and beg her to tell him how it operates. Add had his eyes opened narrowly while thinking intently when he noticed someone was approaching him.

Eve who had been clearly walking ahead of him before was now approaching him.

Her face was the same as always. But maybe it was because her hairstyle and outfit had changed dramatically? Add's heart was beating fast for some reason. No, since when did he ever care about female attires?

Anyways, although he couldn't find out the cause, the conclusion here was that it was difficult for him to look straightly at Eve right now.

"Hmph....."

Add turned his head away to look left but Eve didn't pass by him. She matched her strides to Dynamo's moving speed and walked beside him.

“What do you want?”

Then she should reply with something like ‘I don’t have any particular business with you’. Add prepared to snort back but the reply he got was unexpected.

“I want to discuss something with you.”

“.....”

Those words weren’t like the usual Eve’s. A lot happened but Eve always had been not too fond of Add. Even if she had something to discuss with him, wasn’t it more like Eve to spout couple ice cold remarks before they started?

Of course it wasn’t like Eve always acted this coldly towards everyone. Add provoking her multiple times probably played a large part in her attitude towards him..... Add was unknowingly defending Eve’s cold attitude towards him in his head when he finally came to his senses.

“If you’re talking about Ara and Chung..... There shouldn’t be any problems now.”

Ara was freed from her chains and now was walking with her own two feet. She still had an awkward atmosphere with Chung but the two of them had improved to the point where they chatted from time to time.

“It’s about the El Aisha gave us.”

“Oh that.....”

Actually Add had wanted to ask Eve about that first. Asking the person who experienced it first hand was more reasonable course of action than glaring at the El all day long.

But he found it hard to face the newly changed Eve right now. Maybe it was because he wasn’t used to her changed appearance. Actually even staring at her was uncomfortable right now so Add had been discretely avoiding her.

Add’s eyes caught Rena waving her hand slightly towards him.

She must have meddled unnecessarily again.

“Just how did you activate that El?”

“Even I don’t know how to explain it yet.”

“Yet?”

That was an odd way of describing it. It wouldn’t be a significant point if any human had said it. But wasn’t she a Nasod? Eve was saying that there was a possibility that she might be able to understand it in the future.

“Yes, not yet.”

“.....”

Eve certainly changed. She didn’t just become stronger. Her personality had changed slightly as well. Eve from before had distanced herself from the other members..... But Eve right now was approaching and talking to them first.

Just this much difference was actually amazing.

“This is honestly.... Surprising.”

Eve replied quietly to Add’s honest admiration.

“I cannot understand what happened to me right now. But I’d like to try and understand it from now on. And if I’m ever able to understand it, I’ll share the information with everyone.”

“Everyone?”

“It’s not just me that obtained the El from Aisha.”

Ones that got the Memory of Time and Space were Elsword, Eve, Ara and Add. If Eve had changed like this, then the same should be possible for the other three as well. Unfortunately, Eve, a Nasod was successful first so they couldn’t determine how-.....

“.....It’s emotion.”

With a spark of thought, Add’s brain caught the main point. There was no way Eve, a Nasod couldn’t identify the activation condition if it was something that could be determined by reason and logic. Conversely, if something Eve couldn’t understand was involved, you could almost say for sure that it was emotion.

The condition to activate the El that Aisha gave them, the condition to activate the Memory of Time and Space was emotion.

“You may be right.”

“.....”

Add’s eyes widened in surprise. This pompous Queen of Nasods who had always been insisting that she had no emotions.....did she finally admit it? That she had emotions?

Eve replied confidently towards Add who was looking at her in astonishment.

“That El is a conglomeration of emotions. Even I was momentarily surprised.”

“What?”

“I was very surprised because it was my first time encountering it. But there were no particular problems.”

Add’s expression turned from blankness into smirk. Eve had activated the El with her emotion, yet she believed that those emotions weren’t her own but instead those that were contained in the El.

“I thought emotion was something very inconvenient and illogical..... But I can’t say for sure now.”

“Kukukuk.”

Eve frowned slightly at Add’s laugh but didn’t reply to it.

“That’s all I had to say. I hope this helps with your research.”

“Alright, I’ll use it well for reference. But how come you’re telling me this information?”

Of course, only Eun knew that Add’s ultimate goal was to steal Eve’s Core. Eve wouldn’t know. But Eve sharing information with him when he didn’t even ask was a bit unexpected.

“Because I want to become stronger together with everyone.”

“.....”

“That’s all.”

Eve said this then increased the pace of her strides to move forwards. Add couldn’t mock her anymore as he stared at her back moving further away.

“.....She really changed.”

Until now, Eve hadn’t been that interested in the El Search Party. She had a picky and introverted personality that didn’t like to get along with others.

Of course, Rena who was very sociable took care of Eve a lot and was able to converse with her fluently. But that was only possible because it was Rena. Wasn’t Rena’s sociability to the point where she was also able to smoothly carry out conversations with sharp-tongued Add?

Eve became able to get along with others bit by bit as they traveled together.....but there was still a sense of distance. She prioritized Elsword first then other people came after.

Eve who had been like this was now saying words like ‘together.’

“She really changed.”

Add absentmindedly stared at Eve’s back. He wasn’t in any position to mock her for not knowing about emotions.

Since he didn’t know what this feeling right now was either.



There were occasional demons that got in the subjugation army's way but they were all taken care of with a single shot of Rena's arrow.

Everyone was in the middle of preparing to camp out for the night. Add looked up toward the night sky. He was thinking over the conversation he had with Eve during the day and about this tickling feeling in his heart right now.....Then polite footsteps approached him.

Ara looked around the surroundings once then spoke carefully.

"Mr.Add, I'm sorry but may I speak to you for a moment?"

"You're already speaking."

At Add's cold reply, Ara's eyebrows drooped down then she lowered her head.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you when you were deep in thought. I'll speak to you later."

".....You already broke my concentration. Just say what you came here to say."

He couldn't figure out his issue with Eve no matter how he thought anyways. After getting the permission, Ara sat down carefully beside Add with a relieved expression.

Looking at her carefully, her expression looked rather worn out. Add asked after noticing her fatigued face being shined upon by the moonlight.

"Why do you look so worn out? Was there any problem with the supplies?"

"N, no. Food was really tasty. The meat was especially good."

Seeing Ara shake her head left and right, Add threw in a question randomly.

"Then I don't understand why you look like that. Are you not getting enough sleep?"

"....."

Add had asked without much thought but he must have hit the mark.

Well, the purpose of this subjugation army was to take Ran down. It would be stranger if Ara's mind was at ease.

"So, what do you want to do now?"

"I'm.....not sure."

It looked like Ara still couldn't decide on how she should deal with Ran.

“Elder Brother Aren caused pain and harm to so many people..... Wouldn’t it be selfish for me to try and turn him back?”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“.....Huh?”

“I said, what does that have to do with anything? Why does Ran killing somebody matter to you at all?”

Ara stared at Add with an extremely shocked face. But Add was answering her seriously.

“Why does that matter? Ran or Aren, no matter what evil deeds he committed..... He’s your precious person right? Then you should protect him no matter what.”

“.....Does Mr.Add think that’s righteous?”

“I have no interest in justice.”

Add murmured as he looked up towards the dark night sky.

“Stuff like that. It all burned away long ago.”

“I.....”

“So then Aren must not be that important to you.”

Ara’s face turned pale but Add wasn’t intending on taking back what he said.

“I’m sorry.....but I don’t think I can tell you anything useful about your worries.”

“.....Did something like this happen to you too Mr.Add?”

Ara must have sensed something and asked carefully. Add answered with a head gesture.

Jumping over time in order to go back to the timeline where his most precious person was. Soon as Add decided on this, justice and other people’s circumstances didn’t matter at all for him anymore.

Of course, this wasn’t an easy decision for Add. He worried hefty amount about things like time paradox, side effects of time travel and possibilities of time traveling bringing about some sort of irrevocable disaster.

Time was something that had been paradoxical since the beginning of the universe.....Just a single action from Add might change the flow of history.

“Kukukuk.....”

No, it was already changing. Eve was supposed to be destroyed in Elder and the El Search Party would have naturally disbanded. Even if they had gotten really lucky and held out in Elder, they would have certainly fallen to Elesis in Velder.

Demons would have taken over Elrios already if the El Search Party hadn't existed. This was the outcome Add was trying to prevent. It wasn't because he had any particular grudge against the demons. He just ended up confronting them as he tried to protect Eve.....and the rest was history.

If you considered Add who was completely changing the determined history of the world, Ara's worries were something so miniscule and trivial. But.....

"Decide freely for yourself."

He still didn't want to ruthlessly stomp on her worries. Ara blinked blankly multiple times when Add told her with a loosened voice.

"Run away if you want to, Fight if you want to. Do whatever you want."

".....I don't want to run away."

Didn't Elsword say something like this as well? Ara also refused to run away just like Elsword. They must be somewhat alike because they were both front line fighters.

Add let out a slight laugh then opened his eyes narrowly.

"Why are you talking to me about this? Are you asking me to take your side if something happens?"

"That's not it....."

Ara denied it but still trailed her words. Add knew very well that Ara didn't approach him with that kind of intention. But at Add's words, Ara was looking back to herself to examine if she really didn't have such intentions.

This girl was way too righteous.

She always fights her best to protect others. She never backs out even when her life is in danger. An honest to goodness personality, she was a type that couldn't purposely deceive or hurt others.

Completely opposite from Add. They were polar opposites. While Add did get enraged and frustrated over Eun making a mockery of him.... if you compared only their values, he could talk more on a same page with Eun than Ara.

"I.....want to know what's righteous."

Ara leaned her forehead on the pole of her spear she was grasping tightly. She then spoke with a desperate voice as she closed her eyes. Add didn't have anything to tell her.

There was no way rewinding time was something morality righteous. But Add had performed it multiple times already and will do so again many times as it was necessary.

“You chose the wrong person to discuss this with. Go speak to Rena about things like this.”

“.....I can’t sleep recently.”

Ara didn’t listen to Add’s suggestion and confessed her worries.

“I only see horrifying things whenever I close my eyes.....”

“.....”

Wasn’t the problem of her merging with Eun solved already? Add got startled and examined Ara but she had her eyes closed so she didn’t realize Add staring at her.

“When Elder Brother and Karis turned my village into ruins..... I was too weak to stop them. That’s why I went on a journey and trained. So that I’ll be able to stop Elder Brother next time when I meet him then finally turn him back into Elder Brother Aren.”

That’s right. In the first place, Ara’s problem wasn’t simply from her clashing opinions with Chung. Ara wavering and being unable decide on her course of action was the real reason why she was being influenced by Eun.

Still, she was freed from being a prisoner and she looked alright when she was fighting so Add hadn’t worried too much..... But this problem wasn’t solved yet.

“But I don’t know if that’s the right thing to do.”

“.....”

There was nothing Add could say for her. Add recalled Elsword and Elesis’ relationship and thought about telling her to go consult this with Elsword.... But he changed his mind quickly.

Elsword and Ara seemed similar in that they both had honest to goodness personalities but they were actually different.

Elsword will believe in his own path and move forward even if Elesis tried to destroy the world. It took a bit of time for him to make up his mind but he won’t waver again.

He won’t care about exact circumstances if it was for the purpose related to his most precious person.

There were difference in degrees but Elsword and Add were similar in this regard. That’s why Add had somewhat changed his attitude towards Elsword after their battle with Elesis.

“Too delicate.....”

But Ara cares about others people's circumstances. She cried from painful heart after seeing the tragedy in Hamel and surrendered herself to be imprisoned after learning about Chung's circumstances. Add didn't approve of her actions but he could understand them.

Ara's actions were humane and righteous. Add was the abnormal one here. Although he already knew that.....

As Add was feeling bitter for not being able to say anything, Ara confessed with a shaking voice.

"And I'm afraid that..... Elder Brother will do the same thing to all of you."

"What?"

".....I keep having those kinds of dreams."

The El Search Party is annihilated by Ran and no one else survives. With the corpses of the people she's been traveling together in front of her, Ara is overcome with sense of helplessness and isn't able to do anything.

"Even though I try to fight and protect all of you.... I always lack the strength to do so. Then in front of me who has lost all of you..... Elder Brother Aren smiles towards me just like he did long ago and calls for me."

"....."

"Everyone I knew is gone from this world and the only person left is Elder Brother. I'm so overwhelmed by this thought that I cannot fight or even run away as Elder Brother approaches me."

Ara's voice was shaking as if she was about to cry in any moment.

She must be very embarrassed to speak about this. It was painful to admit that you were lost and wavering.

"The dream ends with Elder Brother.....saying 'now only the two of us are left' as he embraces me."

"That's....."

Add couldn't say that it was nonsense. This dream Ara's been having is actually her looking into the future as she gets merged with Eun. It was a future that actually had a chance of happening.

The future where the El Search Party is annihilated by Ran and only she survives. Ara had been feeling oppressed all this time after seeing this. Ara's back thinly shaking looked so small that Add couldn't say anything back to her.

Should he tell her to forget it? Say that it was only a dream? But facing powerful foes and seeing someone from the El Search Party die..... Add had seen this multiple times as well.

There was only silence between them for a while.

“I’m sorry. I may have said something that sounds too weak.”

Ara got up from her seat. Her voice was still shaking as she turned around to hide her face from Add.

“I spoke about this to you because Lord Eun said I could speak about this to Mr.Add. So don’t be too.....”

“If the event that you are worried about actually happens.....”

Add looked at Ara’s back and spoke sharply.

“I’ll deal with it somehow.”

“.....”

Add rewound time again and again in order to obtain the present where the El Search Party was maintained. He just had to do it again during their fight with Ran.

He would have done so anyways..... So comforting her with just these words weren’t something difficult to do.

“I promise you.”

“.....Thank you.”

Ara replied quietly then walked away slowly. Add realized from seeing her back that his words weren’t able to give her much comfort.

It would have obviously sounded empty.

“Hmph.”

Well it was illogical to say he’ll make somebody’s death as if it never happened by rewinding time. She won’t believe it and there wasn’t much point to her believing either.

It will all be as if it had never happened soon as he rewound time.

If the time where somebody in the El Search Party died came, all he had to do was get rid of it by turning it back many times as it was necessary.

“Yes, I just have to do that.....”

Add let out an empty laugh as he looked up towards the moon in the night sky.

There was a mechanical contraption at the end of the Ancient Waterway. You stepped on a large platform to descend. After that, you had to go through a cave to arrive at the Temple of Water.

The platform was enormous so the entire subjugation army that numbered over hundreds could fit all at once and still had plenty of room left over.

“Haah!”

Of course, demons didn’t just sit around and watch quietly as the army advanced. Shadow Chargers and Snipers fell from above trying to stop them but they were all taken care of at once by Ara with her spear.

“Those are outstanding skills.”

Add put Ara in charge of taking care of the small fries and was just observing from afar when Penensio approached and spoke to him.

“There’s no reason for all of us to be involved when we’re only dealing with minions.”

Just like how Add described lazily, each of the El Search Party members had taken up defensive position around the platform. No matter how many demons came at them, they were all like leaves before the storm against the El Search Party. Minions were no match for them.

Shadow Demons must have decided to attack the North side where Ara was guarding because they were only falling from that direction. Because of this, the other members were not doing anything as they left Ara to energetically fight by herself. Even though dozens of demons were falling at the same time and Ara was fighting by herself, no one else tried to assist her.

There was no need to assist her because they were all going to go flying soon as she swung her spear once. Looking at this made their struggle in Elder feel very surreal.

“But it’s a bit strange. Aren’t the number of demons getting in our way too little?”

“What do you mean?”

Penensio who was admiring Ara’s spear skills asked seriously.

“Ran isn’t a fool. He should know very well that he cannot stop us with just the minions. Why isn’t he responding appropriately?”

“Isn’t that why they sent those guys earlier?”

“Yes, those Shadow Lords.”

“Shadow Lord?”

They call Shadow Masters with strange names. Does the way you call them change when you cross the sea? Add laughed amusedly but Penensio continued gravely.

“He should know plenty well that to stop the Subjugation army, more accurately you people, he needs to send foes of at least that level. Why isn’t he doing that?”

“Hmmm....”

Honestly, even the Shadow Master wasn’t much of a problem to them now. Ran should have known this as well and that must be why he sent the improved version, Chaos Shadow. They struggled against it because only Add and Eve’s attacks worked on it but it was completely cleaned up thanks to Eve who awakened to Memory of Time and Space.

“There shouldn’t be any meaning even if he sent Chaos Shadow again.....”

“So that’s how you people call it.”

Add nodded at Penensio’s words but then felt that something was strange. There was something he was not catching. Add frowned then started to examine what he was missing.

“Be quiet for a bit.”

No matter how many minions are thrown at them, they were all cleaned up with a shot from Rena’s arrow and a swing of Ara’s spear. Both sides should already be expecting that Ran and the El Search Party will end up facing each other in the Temple of Water. So in the meantime, minions were just to annoy them a bit, that’s all.....

Add pressed his hand on his forehead and groaned. This was a feeling as if there was a bomb hidden inside the room yet he couldn’t find it. Just when Add was feeling restless and biting his lips, the platform must have reached the bottom because their descent came to a halt.

And Rena’s warning was heard.

“There’s a lot this time. Be careful everyone.”

At her words, the Velder Knights also drew their weapons. When even Penensio beside him drew his sword, Add suppressed his restlessness then raised his head.

“Ahahahahaha! Oh? You want to play!?”

“.....”

On top, on the platform that was sticking out, they could see a dancing lump of muscles. Add couldn’t say anything after.....seeing a muscular demon over 3 meters tall joyously spinning in place.

Others must have been thinking the same because the entire platform became dead quiet. Lump of muscles finished spinning then jumped off the platform without any hesitation.



Crash!!

The platform shook greatly. The demon that fell off dozens of meters wasn't hurt even slightly as it stretched its arms widely to let out a roar. Judging by how countless Shadow demons fell down along with that roar, it looked like the demons wanted have the showdown here.

"It's Victor."

Add spoke. Penensio was staring at him with a strange expression but Add didn't mind. Enemy has appeared and it was now time to clean up the enemy.

"The El Search Party will take care of that stupid lump of muscles. Others all team up and take care of the minions accordingly. We'll finish this quickly."

At Add's order, the subjugation army immediately split into two. The El Search Party fighting Victor and the Velder Knights fighting the demon minions.

"Finally, someone that looks a bit strong."

".....He's somewhat creepy."

"Let's finish this up quickly and help the other soldiers."

"Preparing for battle."

"Let's take care of this as usual. Wait....."

The El Search Party members each said a line then Add was about to order them to start the battle. But Add paused and looked towards the boy who was standing beside him not saying anything.

"Why are you over here?"

".....Oh, am I not supposed to be here?"

Add let out a laugh when Chung looked startled and scratched his head.

"Never mind. I'm counting on you for cannon support."

Although he was a war hero, he was the temporary Lord before that. But he didn't hesitate to fight in the front line despite his position. Add thought highly of him for this.

"Kukukuk, then let's get rid of him."

"Alright, let's go!"

The battle started with Elsword dashing towards Victor

Five Shadow Chargers jumped at Elsword but he swung his sword to break through them. Ara followed closely after Elsword and ambushed the Shadow Snipers hiding behind Victor, she held her spear with long reach then swung it in a large circle to sweep through all of them at once.

Area around Victor was cleared out immediately and room for a fight was made. Add who was observing the situation up front fired a Void Impact towards Victor as a light check.

“Uugh?!”

Victor was significantly shocked by this and backed off quickly. But the skin on his chest tore and started dripping blood after getting caught up by the shock.

“That guy is a small fry too.”

Add muttered as he stopped assisting. He observed how the situation at the back was going.

Before he knew it, the commander of this army had become Add. Normally, it would be correct for Hamel’s temporary lord Chung and the Velder Knight’s captain Penensio to be in command.... But the influence of the El Search Party was too great in the subjugation army.

And the one who actually came up with the El Search Party’s plans and determined their course of action was Add. He unintentionally became in charge of army of hundreds.

“Not that I care.....”

Chung and Penensio seemed glad that Add took charge of the subjugation army’s command. They almost never objected to Add’s request and methods. The two seemed glad they had been relieved of heavy load of responsibility.

“Anyways....”

Velder Knights were bravely facing the Shadow Demons under Penensio’s command. Their raw strengths fell behind the demons but they were taking down demon after demon by taking up formations of three individuals per squad. You could tell for sure that they were highly trained army of elites.

“They’ll be quite useful.”

They would be useful in their showdown against Elesis after they returned to Velder. Add was formulating their next fight when Rena approached and asked.

“What are you thinking about Add?”

She was facing Add and talking to him while firing an arrow in an opposite direction. Shadow Chargers fell each time she fired. Her skills were remarkable no matter how many times he saw it.

“.....It’s nothing.”

Still, wasn't this way too easy? The battle was going seamlessly in their favor but the feeling that something was off, this uneasy feeling didn't disappear.

Add shook his head then looked towards the front line.

“Hey Elsword! Try fighting him by yourself!”

“Alright, Bight Brother Add!”

From this request telling Elsword to take down Victor by himself, Ara and Eve who were assisting Elsword got surprised and stared at Add. But the person in question, Elsword didn't question the request and threw himself at Victor. Victor also made a large spin as he threw his fist..... Sword and steel fist clashed in mid air and made a clank noise.

“Brat! How dare you damage my body of steel!”

Victor got surprised and backed off around two steps. Elsword didn't miss this chance and closed in while widely swinging his sword upwards. Victor got surprised by this even more and blocked the sword by raising both of his arms. His arm wasn't damaged even slightly..... It was indeed a body of steel just like he boasted.

“Flame Geyser!!”

Sword attacks didn't work properly on Victor. Elsword determined this and struck the ground with his sword. Then a pillar of flame rose up from the ground to strike Victor. Victor got startled and hurriedly backed out.

“Haah!”

It was a great chance. Elsword kicked the ground to jump up and tried to smash down on Victor's head with his sword. Victor instinctively raised his arms to block but his skin tore and blood started to drip from his skin this time.

Victor tried to kick Elsword as he landed from his jump but Elsword noticed this right away and held up his sword to block. Elsword still couldn't do anything about their difference in weight so his body flew up backwards after getting kicked.... But he received no actual damage.

Victor and Elsword stood facing each other with some distance between them as they caught their breaths.

“Hmm.”

“Phew....”

Victor looked quite tense. But although Elsword was at an advantage, he looked like he didn't care much. Only thing in his eyes was the fight in front of him, the enemy in front of him, and the girl stronger than anyone else in the world waiting from him at the end of all this.

“Here I go!”

Elsword charged in and sharply swung his sword. Victor quickly swung his arm to respond.

Add was observing the two’s fight when Eve approached him to ask.

“Why did you do this, Add?”

“I don’t know.....”

Eve must have thought Add wasn’t intending to answer so she didn’t look too pleased. But Add wasn’t trying to be mean right now. He actually couldn’t think of a way to explain his actions.

“We can end this fight quickly anyways. Victor will fall quickly if either you or Ara joined in even just slightly.”

“Then what’s the meaning behind making Elsword fight alone?”

“It’s to prepare for what’s coming next.”

Eve shook her head.

“Elsword might get hurt like this.”

“That’s true too.... Go help him if you want.”

Eve gave Add a gaze as if this was unexpected when he changed his methods. Rena who was listening to the two talking smiled slightly.

“Add, you’re doing this because you want to confirm how much Elsword has grown right?”

“It’s not particularly because of that. It’s just....”

He felt uneasy for some reason. It felt like they shouldn’t give it their all in this fight.

Penensio’s indication was correct. Ran wasn’t a fool. Why was he sending minions that were no match for the El Search Party? They would certainly be in trouble if he sent multiple Chaos Shadows. Of course, there was no way something like Chaos Shadow would be common.

He should know that sending Victor wouldn’t even buy him time. Just why?

Add’s head was continuously searching for what he was missing. It felt like staring at a puzzle that couldn’t be completed because couple pieces were missing.

“This is it!”

“Kuaaaaah!!”

Victor screamed loudly as he fell with a large thud. Add approached behind Elsword who was withdrawing his sword and wiping the sweat off his forehead.

“You beat him.”

“He was quite strong.”

Elsword was panting, he looked exhausted.

Come to think of it, Eve awakening to Memory of Time and Space was when she encountered some kind of emotion during battle.

“Why are you looking at me like that Big Brother Add?”

“.....It’s nothing.”

Wouldn’t this guy be the most likely candidate to awaken to their Memory of Time and Space next? Add felt intrigued and was thinking when a desperate voice warned him.

“Mr.Add! Watch out!!”

“Wha...”

Add suddenly felt a chill go through his spine and tried to look behind. But the attack flying towards him was faster. Scythe that had abruptly appeared by tearing through empty air was flying towards Add’s neck.

Add couldn’t react at all to this abrupt attack.

“Haah!”

But Ara’s spear flying in was even faster. The spear Ara had thrown accurately hit and deflected the scythe that was about to swipe across Add’s neck. Ara’s spear also got deflected up and spun in mid air.

“Kugh.”

It was such a narrow escape from death. Add quickly backed out. Elsword who was catching his breath also raised his weapon with a stiff expression. Ara ran in meanwhile and caught her spear falling from the air.

Scythe that tore apart space as if it was made out of paper, the owner of that scythe opened up the dimension gate and appeared.

“Huhuhu....hecklers.”

Usually, there was a sign before regular dimension gates opened but these gates didn’t have such signs.

As Add stared at the gate nervously, red haired woman carrying a scythe appeared before the El Search Party. She was a beauty with provocative eyes and was wearing a revealing outfit as if to show off her seductive body..... But she looked way too dangerous to feel any charm from her.

“Karis.....”

At Add’s low voice, Succubus Queen Karis majestically lowered her head as if a high class lady was bowing.

“Alright, who should I kill first?”

But her seductive voice was foretelling a brutal future. Just when the group was about to answer.... In that moment, an arrow aimed straightly at Karis’ head flew in.

“Don’t be so hasty. You’ll all get a turn to die one by one.”

But Karis caught the arrow flying towards her face then broke it. The El Search Party instantly realized that she was a formidable opponent and exchanged gazes with each other then finally looked at Add.

“Everyo.....”

“Ahahahaha, did you honestly think I came alone?”

Just when Add was about to give an attack order to the El Search Party, Karis laughed and waved her hand. Then dimension gates opened all around the platform and four Shadow Masters appeared.

“I’m planning to kill you all.... But it’s annoying to take care of every one of you insects individually.”

“Rena and Eve help the Velder Knights and face the Shadow Masters. Everyone else will get Karis.”

“Do you really think that will be so easy?”

Karis was in middle of mocking them when Ara suddenly jumped at her. They haven’t even formed a proper formation and yet she ran in first.

Ara stabbed her spear furiously multiple times but Karis swung her scythe widely to block them all.

“It looks like you’ve made up your mind. But you’re still no match for me.”

“I’ll stop you no matter what.....”

Ara didn’t back out and tried to attack again but Karis snapped her finger. Sound of an explosion was heard then sleeve of Ara’s clothing got blown off. An explosion had been created in an empty space.

Surprised, Add quickly assisted by firing a Void Impact but Karis immediately neutralized it from ever appearing by swinging her hand.

“Ohohoho, do you really think you can defeat me with such crude abilities?”

“Haaah!!”

Elsword’s sword answered her instead. Despite being tired from his fight with Victor, Elsword heroically rushed in and made a heavy swing with his sword. Karis sneered then immediately dodged with a teleport.

“Facing a brat that only uses brute strength head on is a waste of..... Ow!”

Boom! Karis frowned when a cannonball that Chung had fired exploded. It wasn’t a direct hit but she definitely got caught up by the explosion. Although there seemed to be no significant damage.

But here was an opening! Ara held her spear with long reach and stabbed but Karis dodged with a light back flip.

Not only was she strong, she was agile due to her space related abilities. As expected from a general, even the El Search Party couldn’t take her lightly.

Add who was observing the battle with Karis looked around to see how things were going at the other side. Shadow Masters were attacking the Velder Knights located at the back. Eve and Rena were assisting them but the situation wasn’t looking too good.

They were starting to get casualties because of the minions that Shadow Masters were summoning.

“We’ll have to finish this at once..... drive her into the corner!”

Elsword, Ara and Chung understood Add’s instructions and started to launch an all out attack on Karis. But Karis was looking leisurely. She deflected Ara’s spear attacks, dodged Elsword’s sword and was dealing with Chung’s cannonballs by covering her body with her wings.

Then Karis changed the beat of her movements. She spun around to dodge the spear then swung her scythe to aim for Ara’s neck. Chung couldn’t fire his cannon if Karis was nearby an ally.

Elsword got surprised by Ara’s crisis and quickly threw his body while swinging his sword....But as if she was waiting, Karis immediately spun once in mid air to aim for Elsword’s neck this time. Aerial movements, Karis who had wings was capable of 3 dimensional evasion and attacks.

Elsword’s crisis, Add quickly fired a dimension distortion to make Karis back out then shouted.

“Everyone back out!!”

Ara and Elsword who were about to charge in at Karis again quickly realized what Add was trying to do and backed out. After confirming that Chung had backed out as well, Add immediately fired an attack at Karis with all he had.

So you can ignore Void Impact? But you won’t be able to ignore this!

“Gravity Buster!!”

Gravitational field was created and it started compressing the space in the area in front of Add. This attack that compressed even the space with a massive gravity was Add’s new ultimate skill he obtained from the formula enhancements that Aisha told him.

Space was being compressed by such a powerful gravity that it was impossible to observe what was happening in front with a naked eye. Space was brutally being twisted..... Then soon as the space was released, a formless vibration and a heat wave swept through the area.

The heat wave was so intense that everyone else on the platform had to stop fighting and cover their eyes. Obviously, Karis who had gotten hit directly wouldn’t have survived.

There was nothing left in front of Add when the Gravity Buster had ended. But Add didn’t let down his guard. No matter how powerful this skill was, there was no way a demon general would be completely destroyed without a trace by this.....

Slit.

A scythe pressed on Add’s neck.

“Did you rats really think you’d be able to win in Hamel after getting defeated and running away from Velder?”

To think she’d dodge with a teleport right before the impact. Realizing the declaration of death on his neck, Add slowly looked up to see Karis floating upside down pressing her scythe against Add’s neck.

“You somewhat tried hard.... But it’s now time to die right?”

Rena noticed Add’s danger and quickly fired arrows towards Karis. Karis let out a sharp laugh then performed a back flip to dodge all of Rena’s arrows. Add unknowingly stroked his neck that was slightly oozing out blood.

Was this how it felt to have a near death experience? No, he would have certainly been killed.

“Just what’s your purpose?”

Add looked straightly at Karis who was floating in mid air and asked her a question. Then after a slight pause, he fired a Void Impact. Karis who was carelessly about to answer him got startled and dodged but it was already after a portion of her wing had gotten torn off.

“How dare you..... You made a scar on my body!!”

“I said, what’s your purpose?”



Karis was on guard preparing for another Void Impact but relaxed when Add didn't attack again this time.

Looking at her like this, it looked like she was a bit slow.... No, it was probably because Add was too clever.

Anyways, as to be expected from a general, Karis was extremely powerful. Add also realized that Karis was going easy on them. Seeing how she didn't cut Add's throat right away just now, she was toying with them.

"By Ran's request, I'm here to bring his little sister to him."

"....."

Ara got extremely shocked by this and looked up at Karis who was floating in mid air. The other people looked at Ara who was reacting to Karis' words. The fact that Ara was Ran's sister had been kept secret so the Velder Knights who didn't know about this all looked surprised.

"We have no more business in Hamel if you hand over Ran's little sister. We won't invade anymore. But if you resist right now, we won't leave even a single brick of Hamel."

"How are we supposed to trust your words?"

Add snorted. Karis was about to answer him but quickly flapped her wings to dodge. Space she had been floating in shattered and triple space distortions appeared.

"Seriously....."

She couldn't let her guard down because the attacks kept flying towards her in middle of conversation. She'd be more than prepared if this happened while they were in middle of fighting but getting attacked every once in a while like this wasted more of her concentration.

Of course, Add wasn't intending on going through with this kind of negotiation. He had mixed in some words to buy time for everyone to recover their stamina and also added some attacks in the meantime in the hopes of injuring her.

"Negotiations are supposed to be done with a respect from both sides, demon. How foolish of you to think you can pull off a negotiation after you've launched an unwarranted attack on us."

"It's not a negotiation.... It's notification!"

Karis got angry and swung her scythe as she flapped her wings. Then a dimension gate opened and purple orbs started to pour down mercilessly.

"Die! Death Strike!!"

"Everyone gather around me!!"

Add quickly shouted then opened the Dimension Distortion mode. Add looked back after realizing that he couldn't protect Rena and Eve because they were far away. But when Eve swung her arm, a blue barrier was formed around her.

Velder Knights and Rena inside Eve's barrier will be safe. The problem was....

Crash! Boooooom!!

"Kugh...."

Death Strike was way too strong. Add internally screamed after confirming that cracks were forming on his barrier. What was this stupid attack? It would have been instant death if they were hit by this directly.

Hail of purple orbs didn't stop. Add let out a painful cry after realizing that the barrier had reached its limits.

"Big Brother Add, will you be okay?"

"Don't... speak to me right now!"

This much would have been easy if it was just Add protecting himself. But the problem was that barrier's radius had to become wider in order to protect Ara, Elsword and Chung as well. This was consuming Add's mental powers rapidly.

Crack.

Just when hundreds of cracks formed on the barrier....Death Strike finally ended. Add let out a sigh of relief but Karis was smiling cruelly.

"You held out? Then here's one more! Death...."

"Ara! Grab Elsword and run to where Eve is!!"

They couldn't hold out anymore. Add withdrew the barrier then grabbed the back of Chung's neck as he activated the Dynamos to dash towards Eve. Ara was also grabbing Elsword's arm and quickly running towards Eve.

"Strike!"

Then a cruel sentence fell upon the four as they were running away. Purple orbs started to fall on them again. It felt like they've become wild animals desperately running away trying to navigate through falling meteors.

Add would have reached Eve's barrier already if he was by himself....

"....."

But the problem was that he was grabbing Chung. This guy was heavy because of his armor and weapon. This was causing a significant drop in Dynamo's mobility.

He was literally a heavy baggage.

"Mr.Add! Just leave me and....."

"Don't make me laugh!!"

This guy wasn't even an El Search Party member. This thought ran by Add's head for an instant but he didn't let go of his hand grabbing on to Chung. His life would be saved if he left Chung and ran away by himself. But he won't be able to withstand the sense of defeat that came after.

Refusing to yield and risking his life, Add dashed in zigzag formation across the storm of Death Strikes.

"Kiiyahahaha!!"

Hateful sound of laughter that came from above made Add instinctively grind his teeth. The platform was already shattered from the Death Strikes to the point where it was now unrecognisable. Ara and Elsword had already entered Eve's barrier earlier. If he could just advance 30 more meters like this.....

Boooooom!!

In that moment a sound of explosion was heard beside Add then his vision started to spin. Dirt and dust came into his mouth.

Add realized a moment later..... That he was collapsed on the ground.

It was painful to breathe. Chung was collapsed beside him and wasn't getting up.

".....Did we get hit?"

Add forcefully brought himself up. His shoulder blade must have been damaged because it hurt whenever he moved. Thankfully, the second Death Strike had ended..... But staying here lying down was no different than inviting her to kill him.

Chung was unconscious but still breathing thinly.

"Dynamo."

At Add's call, Dynamo, his faithful Nasod moved and placed Chung on top of itself. Dynamo was originally a 1 seater. He had ridden it together with Eve before but that was only for descending carefully. It was a 1 seater if you wanted it to fly normally.

Chung who was unconscious and Add who was injured. Both of them couldn't get on the Dynamo at the same and have it fly normally. Add didn't have any other choice.

He couldn't get on the Dynamo and run away by himself while leaving unconscious Chung behind.

"Cough, Cough."

Add raised his head while pressing on his chest. Karis was afloat in the air looking down at him with a cruel smile.

"Oh a rat is still alive?"

"Hahaha....."

Add let off a strange laugh that he didn't recognise himself as he sent the Dynamo with Chung on top towards where Eve was.

Without the Dynamo..... Add's offensive abilities and mobility was completely gone.

Add was just a regular person without the Dynamos. He'll die from just Karis waving her hand.

"Hanging around soft people must have made me disgustingly soft too....."

Add muttered because what he just did was so absurd. Did it really matter if Chung died or not? He can just let Chung die then call Eun out to time travel.....what was he doing?

"But seriously, I'm so sick of it now....."

Add straightened his back as he muttered. It was also partially because time travel wasn't something that should be done lightly..... But rewinding time again because of someone dying wasn't too preferable for him. He didn't want to do it if possible.

Now that his body was in tatters.....and with the threat of death right in front of him, he could honestly admit it now.

He didn't want helplessly watch someone die anymore.

Whether it was Eve, Rena, Elsword..... or anyone else, he didn't want to see someone who he had talked, ate and spent time together with die anymore.

He decided to jump through time in the first place because he didn't want to see such things, because he didn't want to acknowledge such things. This was Add's starting point.

Add smiled bitterly then collected his breath. Him reaching Eve's barrier barehanded had a very low chance of success but he couldn't just die standing here.

Even if he was going to die, he'd rather die while running forwards.

"It's time to die now right? Got any last words?"

"Hey Karis, you....."

Add laughed as if he was talking about something extremely trivial.

"You're ugly."

"....."

Karis' face turned deep red. Now seriously enraged, Karis swung her scythe again to open a dimension gate.

"Die! Death....."

Add will die for certain if Karis came at him with a close quarter combat. Drawing out this kind of big skill from her will give him a sliver of hope.

Add had provoked Karis in order to draw this attack out.....and it worked perfectly.

Alright, it's now time to dash in order to survive. Add turned around with much struggle and was about to dash with all he had but paused.

He had thought he was going to die but he was going to survive after all. Ara was standing in front of him.

After the second Death Strike had ended and after Add transported Chung, Ara must have read the situation and came out of Eve's barrier by herself.

Even while panting with teary eyes, Ara was examining Add's wounds.

"Are you alright, Mr.Add?"

".....Idiot."

Of course, Ara's mobility was outstanding. She was faster than Add's Dynamos if you took out the fact that she wasn't capable of flying. Still, it would be all over if they were hit even once by Death Strike. It was a perilous venture for her to grab another person and escape.

Well, Add had risked his life in order to save Chung's. He couldn't blame Ara for not being able to stay put and coming out. With another Death Strike about to fall from behind him, Add slowly stretched his hand out towards Ara.

“Then I’ll be counting on you.”

“.....”

But Ara looked like she was shaking her head.....then she suddenly struck Add’s stomach with her palm.

From this unimaginable attack, Add lost his breath and instantly dropped in place. Ara hurriedly caught Add from falling. Even though she was the one who had struck, Ara had a surprised expression as if even she had never thought she’d do such a thing.

“Da.....”

Swear lingered around Add’s throat but empty coughs came first. Add’s body was already in tatters and now he couldn’t even speak after getting hit by Ara. Ara shook her head lightly then whispered.

“Everyone will be fine if I’m gone.”

“.....Hey.”

Add realized what Ara was thinking and quickly tried to move his hand to grab her but his hand didn’t move well. Ara’s attack had come in when he was extremely worn out so just maintaining his consciousness right now was his limit.

Ara held Add so he wouldn’t fall then forced a smile with teary eyes.

“The one Elder Brother is calling is me. So I have to go.”

“.....”

“With this..... I can stop others from being hurt.”

How come he wasn’t able to speak in a moment like this? Add felt a sudden resentment towards his normal human body.

Ara carefully laid Add down then turned around towards Karis. After being injured and getting hit directly by Ara, only thing Add could do was to stare at Ara’s back with a blurry sight.

“Karis! Stop this!”

“Hmm?”

Karis was about to fire a Death Strike but stopped when Ara jumped out of the barrier. Bringing Ara alive was Karis’ goal in the first place.

“I’ll follow you. So.....stop.”

“Alright, go in here.”

Dimension gate appeared when Karis scratched the ground with her scythe. Karis must have thought there could be other attacks so she didn't withdraw the Death Strike she was preparing. All she had to do was cast it soon as someone else jumped out of Eve's barrier.

Add looked at Ara's back with a blurry sight.

"Don't go, you idiot...."

He just had to fight once more using time travel. He couldn't even time travel if Ara was gone. But frustration and rage surged up even more than these thoughts.

Of course, Ara's decision was reasonably correct. It was an adventure to navigate through the falling Death Strikes and try to escape towards Eve's barrier. Maybe it would be possible for highly trained Ara, but Add whose body was no different than a normal human's would instantly get shattered from just getting grazed.

But.....Add's anger surpassed all of these reasons, his body was powerless and didn't move as he wanted. He couldn't even say any words properly.

"Don't g....."

"I'm sorry for troubling you a lot until now, Mr.Add."

Ara looked back towards Add and smiled.

"Thank you, please take care of yourself."

"....."

"Then..... Goodbye."

Ara cried while looking back at Add.

Just when Add was about to spew out these boiling emotions with words and actions, Ara ran and jumped into the dimension gate. When Ara disappeared through the darkness, Karis sneered as she withdrew the Death Strike.

"It wouldn't matter if I smashed you all here right now. But I'll let you off this time."





Karis spoke those detestable words then disappeared through the dimension gate. Only silence remained after all enemies had disappeared.

“You idiot.....”

Add was finally able to move his lips but blood flowed out of his mouth. He couldn't contain his rage. He seriously couldn't contain it.

“You're not going to get away with thi.....”

Add's consciousness that had been refusing to yield up till now suddenly snapped.

While still clenching his fists in frustration.

## 4. Chain of sin

Everything burned away.

The garden boy always played in now didn't even have a single blade of grass left. Not even a single pillar was left of the research lab that boy studied science in to grow his dreams.

"This can't be....."

Most of all.....his most precious person disappeared into the flames.

Boy pushed down on the ground with both of his hands while having his head facing downward. He let out a painful cry.

"No, no, no, no...."

This can't be happening. Why? Why did this happen to me? He's been so happy up till yesterday..... Today where he lost everything didn't feel real at all.

"N, n....."

He couldn't even scream properly. Boy made meaningless sounds for a while. Then a stifling sensation in the boy's chest made him clench his fists so tightly that his hands almost broke.

Tears didn't come out anymore. He cried enough to the point where he was sick of tears.

"This shouldn't happen....."

He just had to grow the garden again if it got burned down. He just had to build the house again if it broke down. But....repairing these won't bring his most precious person back.

"You could have survived if you wanted....."

That person disappeared into the flames alone in order to save the boy. He should have died instead. That would have been better. Guilt and self loathing boiled up from within him.....but boy stomped down on these useless reflections.

"Don't make me laugh....."

Time was fair to everyone. Spilt water couldn't be put back and something that was broken couldn't be made exactly like how it was again.

"Kukukuku....."

It felt so agonizing and painful. But boy didn't even dream of committing suicide or bringing any harm onto himself. This was a life that person saved for him.

How will he live from now on? Decision had already been made.

“I’ll rule over time.....”

That person saved me, so I’ll live my life in order to save that person. I’ll go back to the time where that person exists then turn everything back to how it should have been.

Boy(Time Tracer) that resolved to rule over time and space stood up.

He no longer had any time to cry or delay.

Add opened his eyes abruptly then got up. But pain instantly flowed in and forced him to stop moving.

“You can’t move yet.”

“.....”

Voice came from beside him. Add responded to Eve’s voice by only moving his eyes to look towards her direction. Eve was seated neatly on a chair as she conveyed the situation to him.

“They said your shoulder blade and ribs broke. We used a potion but medic recommended that you shouldn’t move around too much.”

Just like Eve said, Add’s body was covered in bandages. Pain flowed in whenever he moved causing him to sweat heavily. He had to rest and recuperate.

“Belt pouch.”

Add spoke stiffly. Eve realized what he meant and brought the belt that Add always wore. Add took out an ampoule from the belt’s pocket then injected it into his bloodstream without any hesitation.

Eve got surprised from seeing this but Add didn’t care as he finished the procedure quickly. Add crumpled up the empty ampoule then started counting with his fingers. Soon as he counted up to 20, he instantly got up from the bed.

“What happened? How long have I been out?”

“We didn’t progress any further and it’s been one night since then. But.....are you sure you can move right now?”

Add had been sweating heavily from just trying to move before. But now he was calmly getting up and looking around the interior of his personal tent. Although rather than a tent, the place was more like a temporary house.

“I gave myself an anesthetic. I’ll be okay for a while.”

“.....Lie down for now.”

Add ignored Eve and tried to wear his jacket hanging on the cloth hanger. Seeing this, Eve got up from her chair and grabbed his arm. Add looked back at Eve with a haggard face then spoke sharply.

“There’s no time to waste. We’ll respond right away.”

“Alright, so lie down for now. You’re a patient.”

“.....”

Add didn’t have any confidence that he could win in a physical tussle against Eve. Add complied with Eve trying to stop her and sat down on the bed. But he didn’t lie down to prevent his mind from becoming hazy.

“From what I know, it takes a long time for humans to recover when they are injured. So....”

“We’ve lost too much time because I was out. How are others doing?”

Eve looked extremely troubled when she realized that Add didn’t have any intention to lie down to rest. Eve seemed troubled about what she should say for a while then finally let out a low sigh..... Seeing this, Add forgot the current situation and ended up looking at Eve with an extremely surprised expression.

Eve was a Nasod, she didn’t need to breathe. Her sighing in itself was an exceptional reaction.

But Eve seemed she didn’t know why Add was looking at her so surprised and started to explain the current situation for him.

“Ara Haan left, Karis disappeared. We’re staying put for now tending to the wounded. Rena and Penensio are discussing further matters right now.”

“What about Chung?”

“He’s safe. He wasn’t injured much as you thanks to his armor. Actually, you are the one who’s been injured the most.”

That was because Eve’s Atomic Shield had much superior defenses than Add’s dimension distortion barrier. This whole mess had occurred because they hadn’t known that Karis could ceaselessly rain down such a powerful wide area attack.

“Alright. Then bring everyone here. Let’s discuss what to do next.”

“There’s no need to be so hasty. Even though Ara Haan was captured, she’s still Ran’s sibling so wouldn’t she be treated with care?”

“Don’t make me laugh. We cannot rely on enemy’s generosity.....!”

Add responded emotionally but closed his mouth quickly. Even he became self aware that he was acting too hot headed right now.

“Sorry, I lost my cool for a bit there.”

“I know how you feel but I’m saying this because you might hurt yourself.”

“.....”

Why was Eve treating him so kindly today?

Add was very surprised by this and didn’t have any clue on how he should respond. But Eve’s expression was changeless..... He couldn’t read what she was thinking.

So Add ended up saying something out of the blue.

“I’m telling you this right now. I’m not acting like this because Ara has been captured. It’s because I’m frustrated about getting beaten.”

“It’s the same for me as well.”

Add didn’t know what else he should say when Eve revealed that she wasn’t misunderstanding. He hadn’t realized it when he just woke up because he was trying to figure out what happened.... But wasn’t he having trouble looking straightly at Eve recently?

He had always wanted a chance to be alone with her. But now, his heart somehow felt guilty from both of them being alone together. Why was that? He hadn’t done anything wrong.

Add was muttering internally when Eve took out a potion and bandages from a medical box then approached him.

“I’ll change your bandages before everyone gathers to discuss.”

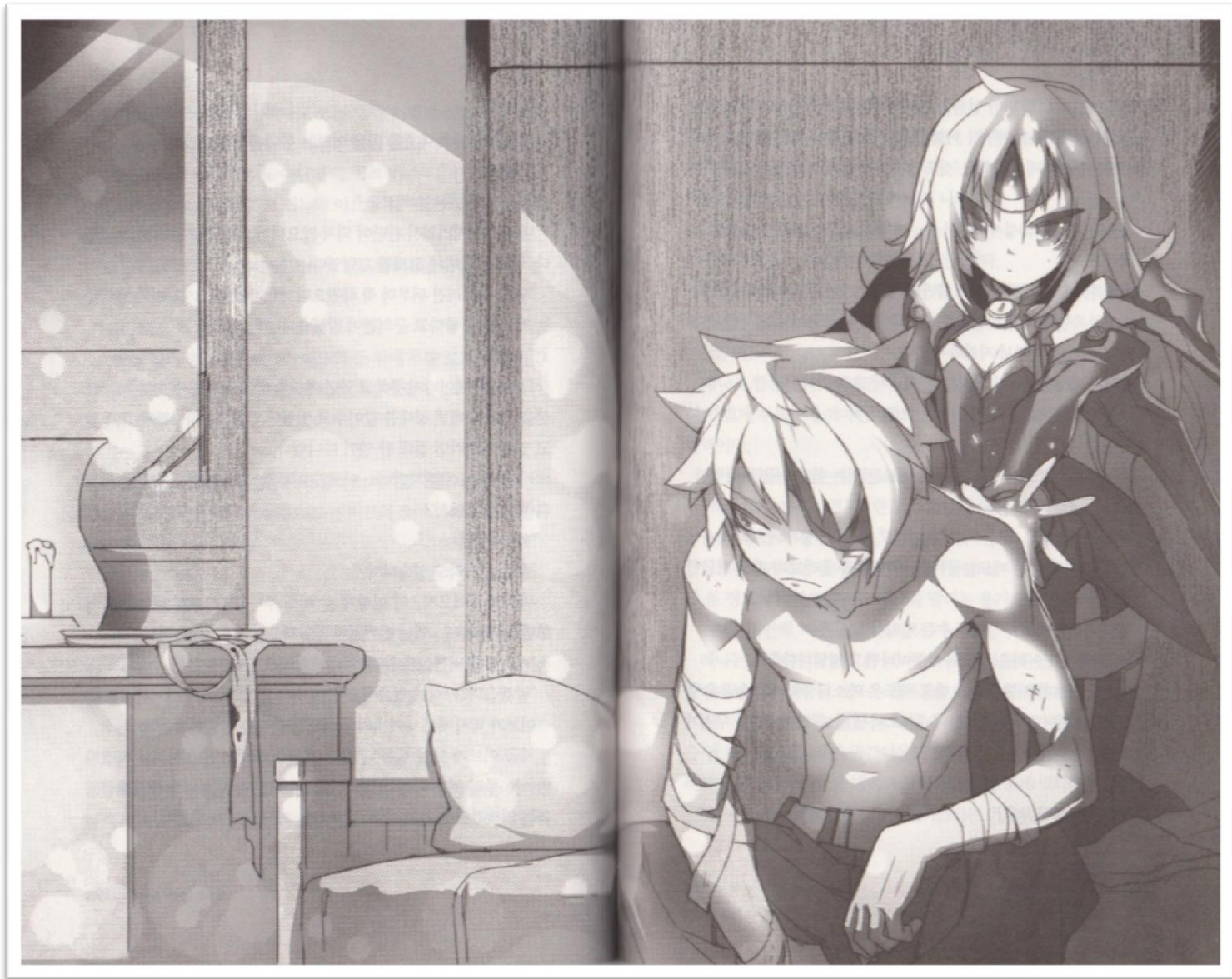
“What?”

“I’ve already done this before.”

Eve climbed up on the bed then knelt behind Add’s back. She lightly stripped off the bandages tied around Add’s top then sprayed the potion on his wounds.

“.....”

He would have felt a significant pain from this procedure but he was anesthetized already. Add went in a state of confusion from this situation and wasn’t able to react. He almost jumped when Eve’s hand made contact with his shoulder.



“Ugh....”

“Does it feel painful?”

Add quickly shook his head. Then Eve started to spread the potion on Add’s skin with her palm. Add’s head started feeling lofty from Eve’s hands treating his wounds. It felt surreal.

“Tell me if it hurts”

“.....Continue.”

Only thing Add could do in response at the moment was to answer bluntly. Add face became red up to his ears as he stayed completely still. Eve finished rubbing the potion then she even tied fresh bandages for him.

Eve got up from the bed after snapping off the bandage with her mouth.

“It’s finished.”

“.....Looks like you’re experienced in this.”

His head was too dizzy right now to make proper judgements so it would be better to change the subject. Eve nodded lightly.

“I’ve been doing this ever since you were knocked out. Medic told me that it’s more effective to rub the potion on the wound every 3 hours.”

“.....”

So while Add was unconscious, Eve had been continuously beside him, nursing him, kept spraying the potion on his wounds and was changing his bandages? This was something Eve he had known up till now would have never done.

Maybe if it was Rena....but for Eve to treat him like this? Just what kind of changes did her mind go through?

“Why, to me.....”

“Is there any problems?”

What should he ask? Why are you treating me so nicely? He should have just blatantly asked ....but his mouth didn’t move.

“.....Bring the others. We’ll have a meeting to discuss how we should respond.”

“Understood. Rest up meanwhile.”

Add ruffled his hair when Eve left the tent.

Actions Eve showed just now. He would be able to understand them if it was any normal person trying to nurse him..... But this was Eve! Eve always had a sense of distance with all of the El Search Party members except Elsword and she especially had the largest distance with Add.

Of course Add said things to Eve that warranted that kind of distance..... But he didn't know how to face her now that she was suddenly showing such a tender attitude towards him. He already had his head filled with dealing with her strangely mature atmosphere. But to make matters more confusing, she was now treating him this nicely.

Just what happened.....as she awakened to Memory of Time and Space?

“Phew.....”

Add unconsciously stroked the bandages that Eve tied for him then shook his head. He won't get any proper conclusions by getting worked up over something he didn't have enough data for. He had to observe this matter over longer period of time.

The shape of his mouth curving up right now wasn't because he was in pain.

“Huh? Big Brother Add? Why are you snickering by yourself?”

“.....I wasn't you idiot.”

Add glared fiercely as he possibly could when Elsword threw a question at him as he entered.

Starting with Elsword, Rena, Eve, Penensio and Chung also gathered in Add's personal tent. Add sat on the bed and looked around at the others that were standing then asked for confirmation about the most urgent issue.

“How many were wounded from the Velder Knights?”

“23 were injured to the point where they cannot participate in battle.”

Even though Rena and Eve had assisted them, it was too much for the Velder Knights to handle 4 Shadow Masters at once. Add nodded heavily at Penensio's answer.

“We're pulling back.”

“Are you serious Big Brother Add?”

Add sighed when Elsword asked for confirmation.

“These guys were toying with us. There's no point in us playing along. There's also no guarantee that they won't change their mind and attack Hamel. It's better to return to Hamel for now and make further preparations.”



“What about Ara Haan?”

At Eve’s question, Add looked around at the others

“I’ll go get her by myself. Rest of you return to Hamel. Karis might attack again so be careful.”

“Umm, Add?”

Rena took a step forward then lightly pressed down on Add’s head. ....She was certainly pressing down lightly but there was an enormous force in her hand. The pressure was as if his head was going to get buried into his body.

Rena looked down at Add with a face void of any smile.

“As I thought, you’re still in a lot of pain right? Let’s talk after you get a long rest.”

“.....Rena, don’t be angry.”

Eve hesitantly pulled on Rena’s clothing. It was a brave act trying to stop Rena who was letting out such a scary pressure when everyone else was nervously silent.

“Phew, I’m sorry. You’re still hurt and yet, I without realizing....”

Rena apologized then stopped pressing down on Add’s head. Add who was finally freed from Rena’s terrifying pressure made some fake coughs as he protested.

“I’m saying this after thinking rationally. I have the best mobility out of everyone here. I can even perform space warp for short distances. So is there any problem with me infiltrating into the enemy territory and getting Ara out?”

“Big Brother Add, that’s reckless. It’s not just Ran. That woman called Keris was also at a general’s level. You can’t handle them by yourself.”

Going alone to where two demon generals were waiting was basically suicide. But Add refused to comply.

“It’s Karis, not Keris. And yes, she is indeed a demon general. But who said I was going to fight them? I’ll go and just get Ara out in secret. You guys will just get in my way.”

“.....”

Everyone closed their mouths at Add’s cold calculated plan. Add’s plan of him infiltrating alone and rescuing Ara somewhat made sense. Rena, Elsword, Eve and Chung all had various abilities but weren’t skilled in infiltration.

Not only that, while Add didn't explain it to the rest of them, he was putting time travel into account as well. Long as he could make contact with Ara, he could bring Eun out then time travel. No, maybe Eun was already out and running amok.

'At least she won't get done in.....'

Eun should be guaranteeing Ara's safety. Even if Add was found out in middle of his mission, he just had to meet Ara then go back to time before they fought Karis.

"I refuse, Add."

"What?"

Add's eyes widened when not just any other person but Eve was the one who protested. This was totally unexpected.

"You won't return with the Velder Knights? Why?"

"I'll go with you and rescue Ara Haan."

"You must not have understood the plan. You'll only get in the way if you followed."

Even while responding, Add tried making a hypothesis.

Should he change it into a feint operation? Someone causes a disturbance in the Temple of Water while Add uses that chance to contact Ara..... No, it was way too dangerous and he couldn't leave it to Eve.

But Eve's suggestion went way beyond Add's expectations.

"We'll discard that plan."

".....Then what do you want to do?"

At Add's question, Rena smiled then raised her hand.

"Yea, I agree with Eve."

"We can't let Big Brother Add go alone. I also agree with Eve."

"I also think Mr.Add's plan is reckless."

When even Chung joined in, Add was so dumbfounded that he let out an empty laugh.

"Kukukuk, what? Everyone seems to be in sync. Then tell me the alternative plan. Just what do you want to do?"

"We'll come with you and rescue Ara Haan."

“Don’t make me repeat myself. Give me the exact detail. Even if I get found out, Ara and I can get out easily. But you guys.....”

“If we lost this time then we just have to win next time.”

Add shut his mouth. It wasn’t because he was surprised that Eve didn’t speak in a civil tone that she always did.

It was because what she just said sounded familiar.

“This is what you told us when we were all dejected after our fight in Velder. That if we lost this time then we just have to win next time. We’ll follow those words now.”

“You’re not making any sense. Maybe it would work out if Ran was by himself. But Karis is also there. There’s two generals.”

“I’m not going to lose this time.”

Elsword calmly displayed his determination.

“I resolved not to lose against anyone until I meet my big sister again..... So this time, I’ll rescue Big Sister Ara and win.”

“Everyone’s already decided Add. Are you still going to be stubborn? I’ll scold you if you do.”

Add shook his head when Rena concluded.

“.....You’re all driving me crazy. You all saw Karis’ skills already. Why are you trying to do something so reckless?”

“Because I want everyone to be together.”

Eve spoke resolutely. Add replied while feeling despondent.

“We’re facing two generals. Even if we somehow win, it won’t be strange if some of us died in the process.”

“I won’t let anyone die.”

Eve promised to herself then held her hand out towards Add.

“I promise. So come together with us, Add.”

“.....”

Eve held out her hand and Elsword and Rena looked at him while smiling beside her.

Eve stood still with her hand held out as if she will continue to wait. Eve holding her hand out towards him.....looked way too beautiful that....

Add ended up grabbing her hand.

“Then it’s decided. Let’s all go rescue Ara Haan together.”

Their plan was decided.

Velder Knights started preparing to go back. They’ll finish all preparations during the night then leave in the morning.

Add was watching the knights pack up from the distance then moved his gaze upwards. Nothing could be seen because they were underground.

“You can’t see the stars right?”

“.....”

It was a sociable voice. Add would have normally replied but he instead abruptly turned his head around to glare at the voice’s owner. Moving this abruptly caused a dull pain in his shoulder and ribs. The effect of anesthetic must be ending.

“Just what were you thinking? Isn’t it your role to stop the kids if they say something stupid?”

“Something stupid.....?”

Rena stared at Add with a complicated expression. It was a gaze of an older sister looking at her crooked teenage younger brother.

“I’m going to scold you if you say something like that one more time.”

“Don’t joke with me. Just what did you guys talk about while I was unconscious? Why is Eve saying something so outrageous and everyone is agreeing with her?”

“.....”

Rena crossed her arms and stared at Add silently for a while then shook her head.

“I’m thankful that you’re worried about us but don’t try to dote on us too much.”

“Dote? Nonsense! You’re all trying to get in the way of my perfect plan!”

“Add, calm down.”

Rena told him calmly. Add realized he was breathing heavily. He barely managed to contain his emotions and keep his cool. For Add, the fact that he unknowingly grabbed the hand Eve held out to him was quite shocking.

“Geez, you should have stopped them when they were spouting nonsense. There’s a limit to how soft you can be.”

“I’ll seriously get angry if you call Eve’s opinion nonsense one more time.”

Rena got serious and told him severely but Add didn’t back out either.

“It’s not like Nasods always make reasonable and logical decisions all the time. They can malfunction from time to time. There must have been some kind of error after she awakened to Memory of Time and Space. Why isn’t anyone considering that possibility? Are you saying machine’s opinion is always right? That would be so only if they aren’t broken!”

“Eve didn’t refuse your plan as a Nasod.”

“Then what? What did she refuse it as?”

Rena calmly shook her head when Add questioned angrily.

“You’ll have to listen to the answer directly from Eve. It’s not something for me to tell you.”

“.....”

“And, I also realize fully well that this will be dangerous. But I’ll give it my best as well so don’t worry too much.”

Add bit his lips in frustration when Rena tried to soothe and coax him. He had indeed been feeling that Rena hadn’t revealed the full extent of her skills.

Getting done in by Elesis was because she got struck while trying to cover for Add. Her role had always been rear support after all. Also, it would have been difficult for her to support them with all of her ability in their fight with Elesis because Ara and Elsword were fighting so close up with Elesis at the time.

“I admit that your skills are extraordinary. But there are two generals. We have to risk our lives. Actually, we don’t even have any guarantee of victory against Ran alone.”

“Yes, I know.”

“.....There shouldn’t be this much value to Ara. Frankly, isn’t this a sibling reunion? Also, considering her position, it would be better for her to seek protection from the demons than stay with the humans.”

“You’re saying all of that Add. But then why are you trying to get Ara back?”

Rena spoke to him while smiling. Add became at a loss for an answer. For Add, he needed Eun near him for the sake of time traveling.

Of course, he'll admit that wasn't the only reason..... But the major reason he had to jump deep into the enemy territory alone was indeed because he required Eun's assistance.

When he couldn't answer, Rena stretched out her hand and petted Add's head.

"Add, I know you're more earnest than you seem and really care for us. So.....can you believe in us a bit more?"

"Don't say something that makes no sense. Anyways, I'm against this."

Add made a grave expression then pushed Rena's arm away. Rena made a face of an older sister looking at her troublemaker younger sibling then nodded while smiling.

"Alright, then let's just say that we're following you stubbornly. Will that be fine?"

"....."

She's not getting it. Add got tired of this and shook his head.

"Add, you prioritized Chung's life even when your own life was in danger right?"

"That was because I could run and he was knocked out."

"Yes, and we can go and Ara is captured. That's why we're all going together."

Rena returned Add's words right back at him. It was an answer that made no sense.... But Rena already looked determined.

"I'm disappointed. I thought you'd be smarter than this."

Eve and Elsword would change their minds if he could just convince Rena. But he'll have to give up on this method.

"Yea, I'm sorry. But I still can't let you go alone."

"....."

Those words strangely rang in his heart that his steps almost stopped. But Add forced himself to move.

Add returned to his tent in order to organize his complicated thoughts. He should pack up and think about what to do next.....

When he entered the tent, he saw that Eve was sitting inside. Add paused to look around at the furniture to confirm that this was indeed his personal tent.

“Get out of here if you don’t have any further business.”

Alone with Eve. He would have normally tried to carry out the conversation long as possible but the situation was different this time. He might have to run away during the night if necessary.

“I’m only sitting here. I won’t get in your way.”

“.....”

Ignoring the nonsensical words, Add passed by Eve and rummaged through his bag to confirm that he had spare anesthetics. He then stole look back behind him. Eve was sitting without moving even a finger ever since he had entered.

It was as if a beautiful doll had taken up position in his room. It was something he desired very much. But inside of his head was so complicated right now that his concentration was being divided.

“You sitting there is distracting. Go back to your tent.”

“I refuse.”

“.....What?”

Add doubted if he heard Eve right from her cold answer. On the other hand, Eve slightly turned her head to look towards him.

Her head gesture was so graceful.....that Add’s head became numb.

“I refuse, Add.”

“.....Wait, why? It wouldn’t be that you want to stay here because you like this tent.”

“Yes, I’m trying to watch over you. I’ll follow you if you go anywhere else.”

Surveillance. Add realized what she meant then groaned..... But he was impressed at the same time.

No way, for a machine to have such a flexible thought process?

“So what you mean is that, I might just agree with your plan on the surface then run off by myself during the night. So you’re going to stay beside me and keep me on surveillance? Do I understand this right?”

“It’s not surveillance. I’m just watching over you. Your condition might worsen.”

“.....”

Add had forgotten it, but he was a patient. Even with the potion's effect, he should have normally needed to rest around half a month. He was only suppressing his pain with anesthetics.

"It's not a wound that would worsen all of a sudden. Most of all, you should also prepare to leave....."

"I asked Elsword and Rena for that."

"But you should have personal things to do....."

"There's no problem for me even if I don't eat or sleep. I also do not know much about return preparations. Rena and Elsword are helping the Velder Knights and someone has to guard the patient. So I'm the most adequate one for this job."

That's true, seamless reasoning as to be expected from perfect queen of Nasods.

Add was impressed but dumbstruck at the same time. Nasods could carry out missions without eating or sleeping so they would seem perfect for surveillance duties. But their thought processes were one dimensional so they could be easily fooled.

But Eve was an exceptional existence, Nasod ever so alike humans. She wasn't knowledgeable about worldly affairs so maybe she could be fooled in that department..... But it seemed it would be impossible for Add to fool Eve and escape by himself in this situation.

Eve must have interpreted Add's silence differently because she added.

"I'm telling you now but I've been guarding beside you ever since you were unconscious. I insure you of objective reliability.

"....."

Although he didn't know what kind of reliability that was.

Add suppressed his aching head then delved into his thoughts. The relationship between Add and Eve until now had been Add mocking and provoking, then Eve being offended and responding.

Structure where if Add pushed, Eve defended.

But after she awakened to Memory of Time and Space, Eve had been strangely pushing assertively. Add was at a loss for how he should react at this sudden role reversal.

"So..... you're going to guard beside me all night?"

"I also did last night as well."

"....."

How was he going to refuse? Wait, was there any reason to refuse? Add thought deeply.



He was still angry about them deciding to go all together..... But he couldn't turn back the decision anymore. Also, it wasn't a bad plan if you thought about it carefully.

If Elsword, Eve and Rena cause a disturbance and buy him time..... There won't be a huge problem unless Ran and Karis came at them in same time. All Add had to do was to locate Ara fast as possible, contact her then turn back time.

"Alright, but in turn...."

"What is it?"

What should he get out of this in return? Add didn't know yet but continued the conversation as he laughed.

"I'll put up with my discomfort and accept your request. So you comply with whatever I request of you next time."

"Long as it's not about this plan."

When Eve accepted conditionally, Add felt a bit relieved and also curious at the same time.

"But why are you so obsessed about this plan? You should know very well that it's dangerous. And perhaps it would be different if Elsword was captured, but you and Ara don't have much to do with each other right?"

Of course, they were both girls of similar age(?). It was strange to give age to Eve who was a Nasod..... But if you looked at how they conversed with one another, there was a strong impression that Eve treated Rena as a respectable senior. So there shouldn't be any problem with treating Ara and Eve as peers?

Well, considering this, it wouldn't be strange if they were friendly with each other..... But Ara had been having a hard time facing Eve, and Eve hadn't been too interested in Ara. But now, Eve was being strangely insistent.

"Then would you ignore it if I was captured?"

"Ah, of course not."

Add answered without a thought then winced. Wasn't this basically confessing that he was after Eve's core?

"Even if it's not me and others members were captured instead, you would have tried to rescue them. It's the same for me."

"....."

You're giving me a strange evaluation. Add was about to say this but his words didn't come out. He couldn't deny Eve's words.

It was blatantly obvious to rewind time in order to save Eve. Since he couldn't achieve his goals if she was destroyed.

But rewinding time in order to save Rena and Elsword.....was actually unnecessary. Add knew this but preformed it anyways.

The goal Add desired was to steal Eve's core in a way he could accept. Since he went through all the dangerous struggles of rewinding time.....he wanted the fruit of his efforts to be sweet. He wanted it to be a satisfactory achievement.

Even if Elsword or Rena had gotten captured by Ran, Add would have resolved himself to rescue them. Eve? He didn't even need to say.

"It would be better for you to sleep early since you're a patient."

".....I'll do that."

Add who was deep in thought nodded. He hadn't completely understood what Eve was thinking yet. But he confirmed that he couldn't get her to change her mind. Also, although their reasons were different, he could somewhat sympathize with her wishes.

Add lay down on his bed. He tried to turn the light off then stopped. Like this, Eve with her chair near his bedside will sit there all night.

".....I know it will sound like I'm saying this late, but it's really bothersome for me if you just sit there while I'm sleeping."

"Even if I'm not moving?"

"Yes."

"Understood. Then I'll go to sleep as well."

Eve said this then closed her eyes and didn't speak anymore. She was already asleep. She didn't need to sleep if she wanted but she could also sleep whenever she wanted.

Add murmured in a low voice while admiring.

".....She indeed changed a lot."

She became more assertive with personal relationships and started to express her opinions more strongly.

Of course, what Eve was saying was still based off cold and reasonable decisions..... But Eve coming first to Add's tent to stay wasn't something that was imaginable from previous Eve.

"Nasod that evolves and changes..... Truly amazing."

Even though there was an influence from the Memory of Time and Space, this was truly wondrous. Wasn't she probably the first Nasod like this in history?

Add repeatedly admired as he stared at sleeping Eve. Gaze of Add who was examining academically then headed towards Eve's core.

I want it.

It's extremely desirable.

Before, he had only wanted it because it was an important key to time travel..... But now he desired the core because it should have records of the process of how Eve's action patterns and thought processes were changing. Even if it wasn't related to time travel, it was a treasure he wanted to steal no matter what.

Add who was mesmerized staring at the core unknowingly stretched out his hand towards it. Of course he couldn't reach it while he was lying down.

But if he got up, no, if he attacked now using the Dynamos, he could at once.....

"It's not the time yet....."

He had to observe a bit more. He had to let it ripen more.

He couldn't see these kinds of changes anymore if he took Eve's core now. What will happen? How would she change? Infinite possibilities were hidden inside if he left the core alone.

"Yes, it's not the time yet....."

Add suppressed his greed as he stared at sleeping Eve.

Of course, he wasn't planning to observe her forever. He couldn't endlessly delay his own goals so he should take Eve's core in the end. But he wanted to collect as much data he could until that time came.

"That's right. Kukukuk....."

Add who got excited as a researcher in a long time nodded delightfully. He finally understood why he had been having a hard time facing this newly changed Eve.

He had been avoiding facing her because he couldn't understand the fact that Nasods changed. But shouldn't researchers be obviously excited about results that defied common sense?

Add laughed quietly from the pleasure that he hasn't felt in a while.

It felt like he couldn't sleep tonight because he was too excited. This wasn't because someone was beside him. This was certainly an excitement that a researcher felt when he encountered a new test subject.

He got too excited.

“.....”

Add was finally able to fall asleep late at night. He got up while stretching. Although this place was underground, he could tell it was morning from the light coming in from various cracks on the ceiling.

“Yawn.”

He could barely get any sleep last night because he was staring at Eve while imagining and analyzing her action and speech patterns all night long. Add was about to get up as he recalled the enjoyable time he had last night. But he realized that the tent was empty.

“What?”

Chair that Eve had been sitting on was empty. Add unknowingly stroked the empty chair then clicked his tongue. There was no way any heat would be remaining when she wasn't even a human.

“Where did she go?”

Add had only slept for about 1 or 2 hours. This meant it hadn't been long since Eve got up and moved.

Add got out of the bed then wore his jacket as he moved out of his tent. It was still early morning so most of the Velder Knights were asleep except for lookouts.

“Where's Eve?”

Where did she go when she was the one who volunteered to keep him on surveillance? Add had now decided to give up on the idea of going to the Temple of Water alone. But shouldn't Add's decision and Eve's surveillance be separate matters?

It was difficult to ask around because it was so early in the morning. Add thought he might find some clues in Eve's personal tent so he headed there. When he approached and looked, he could see a faint silhouette moving inside thanks to the light coming from inside.

“What, why are you here.....”

Add muttered as he entered Eve’s tent then froze up. Eve also saw Add enter and froze.

Eve was in middle of changing her clothes. Her hair was slightly wet from water. Judging from the bowl beside her, she must have tried to lightly wash herself.

“.....Uh.”

A suddenly established silence. Add desperately tried to keep cool while organizing his thoughts.

Didn’t Nasods not require bathing? Of course it’s not like they didn’t have any concept of cleanliness. But they didn’t require it often. If you also took the events from before into account, you could only conclude that Eve becoming interested in bathing was because of Rena and Ara’s influence.

Ah, a Nasod that can be influenced by her surrounding environments and alter her manner of living, how graceful!

“.....”

“.....”

Add instantly wrote down a page in his mind’s research log then realized nothing was going to change about this situation from him writing logs in his head.

Eve looked surprised and was blankly staring at Add.

“Wait, wait a second.”

Add took a deep breath then looked down at his toes. Why was he so startled searching for what to say?

Eve was changing? So what? This wasn’t even the first time.

Add made a resolve then took his gaze off his toes to look straightly at Eve. As if his gaze was some kind of a signal, Eve slowly adjusted the clothing she was about to wear.

Alright, let’s play this cool.

“N-n-n-n-ext time you go somewhere.....”

Playing cool or whatever, it all went down the drain. Add wanted pull his tongue out. His face turned red at the same time.

“How rude.....”

Along with Eve’s freezing sentence, Moby and Reby jumped at Add.



After getting hit by Nasod gear attacks and exiting Eve's tent, Add sat crouching down and sighed.

".....What? What was that?"

She must have taken into account that Add was a patient so Nasod gears' attacks were bearable. Of course, they were still circling above Add's head and hitting him periodically, but let's ignore that. Ignore it.

His head felt like it was going to explode.

".....Am I crazy?"

He could only explain it this way. No, why did it matter if whether Eve was naked or not? Or even if she was disassembling herself?

Eve was a Nasod. Not a human.

So a clay doll was changing its clothes.....where would you find someone who got embarrassed after seeing this? Seriously, what kind of crazy person was that?

Of course there might be a human who had that much delicacy and ability to sympathize. Since Eve was a Nasod that boasted perfectness that had never been seen before in history, since she was ever so close to a human, there might be idiots that made such mistakes.

But that wasn't Add.

Eve was a beautiful research subject. She was a treasure house that Add wanted to discover everything about. To make a comparison, Add was a ruins explorer and Eve was an ancient ruin that held ancient treasures buried within. While an explorer could look at the ruins in admiration and compliment its beauty.....he should never be embarrassed from it.

Add was actually like this too. This wasn't the first time he saw Eve's bare body. Didn't he just pass it over indifferently last time?

But this second time.....

".....Am I crazy?"

He repeated his words. Add shook his head rapidly. He couldn't understand his own reaction. This was now a situation where he had to dissect himself before he dissected Eve.

There were couple similar instances due to Eun's foolery. Add had been startled and embarrassed every time in those instances..... But that was only because the other person was a life form.

He had never shown that kind of reaction towards Eve.

“I did react during that time with the swimsuit.....”

It was an honest confession he could say because no one else was listening. According to Add’s self examination at the time, that was because the swimsuit suited Eve well. It was because she had stirred up from within Add a fashion sense that he hadn’t realized before. That’s also how he had analyzed himself getting stirred up from looking at Eve’s changed appearance from Memory of Time and Space.

But it wasn’t even because of that this time. He reacted even though she wasn’t wearing any clothes.

“No way. No way.....”

He wasn’t reacting to Eve’s attires. He was reacting to Eve. Add’s clever brain had already made this cold evaluation but his mouth was denying it.

“There must be something I’ve missed.....”

For him to confuse his sense of distance with his test subject? He had to get rid of his title as a researcher like this.

Add kicked the ground and got up after shooing away Moby and Reby that were still hitting his head.

“What did you miss?”

“.....”

Add froze from the cold voice. After looking back a tempo late, Eve standing pompously came into his eyes.

Of course, she was wearing clothes.

They exchanged gazes, but Add unknowingly avoided her gaze. Eve spoke stiffly.

“There should be something you should say to me.”

“.....Wake Rena and Elsword up. Let’s get moving fast as possible.”

“.....”

Eve’s gaze became even colder but Add forcefully turned around to show his back. If this was human to human.....Of course there was something he should say in this situation. He had already said it couple times already. The method to apologize had been almost brainwashed into him by Ara.



But even if everything was to break down, he couldn't apologize here. He shouldn't apologize here.

Add had to always treat Eve in an engineer's perspective.

He had to maintain this sense of distance. He couldn't achieve his goal if this was to break down.

He knew that apologizing now and promising that it won't happen again.....would be beneficial to making her turn around to look at him. Even though this incident hadn't been intentional, it was a common sense that a person who admits their mistake and apologizes first looks much better.

But he couldn't do that even though he knew. He'll break down if he did.

After some time, Eve's footsteps were heard. Moby who's been regrettably rotating above Add's head also followed Eve as Add pushed it away.

".....Although it wasn't intentional, I apologize for intruding rudely. I'll be careful next time."

Words that had been clumped up inside him finally came out after no one was around to hear it. The words came out because he just couldn't hold them in anymore. Those void words broke up solemnly in midair.

Still buried in his sense of regret, Add clenched his fists then shook his head.

"This is not good....."

Add was wavering and not responding properly from Eve's change. Everything will be ruined if he couldn't control his sense of distance with Eve.

Add's ultimate goal was to steal Eve's core and go back in time.

He couldn't give any attachment during this process. Pretending to give attachment was fine.... But he couldn't let his true feelings waver as well. It will ruin everything.

"Looks like I'm going insane too....."

For him to be wavering so much from a change in his test subject. It was to the point where he began to doubt himself.

A jump through space.

Ara arrived through the dimension gate and blinked. This space was colored all in blue and white. There was a golden throne at the end of the hall.

A seductive voice came from above her head.

“I brought her just like you asked.”

Karis who also jumped through the dimension gate was talking. Ara looked towards where Karis' words were directed then instinctively grabbed her spear tightly.

There was a man sitting on the throne. There were no emotions in his narrowly opened red eyes.

“Good job.”

“.....Elder Brother Aren!”

At Ran's word, Ara grabbed her spear then collected her breath. Her goal was to turn Ran back into Aren, they finally met each other.

But Ran didn't give any eye to Ara and spoke towards Karis.

“Go now.”

“You got what you wanted so you don't have any business with me anymore? That's harsh.”

“Go back to Velder.”

“Alright, you want me to let you two talk by yourselves right?”

Karis opened a dimension gate again then disappeared through it while cackling. There was only Ran and Ara left in the Hall of Water now.

Ara took a deep breath then slowly approached Ran. Ran was looking up towards the empty air.

“Elder Brother.”

“Yes.”

He didn't even stare at her as he replied. Ara internally called Eun but she didn't answer. It seemed she was asleep. Eun had been fine just until their last conversation but something must have gotten tangled up when they jumped through the dimension gate.

“You are.....Elder Brother Aren right?”

“There was a time when I was called that.”

Ran finally lowered his gaze towards Ara. His eyes were so cold that Ara felt the chills. Even while terrified, Ara bravely fixed her spear.

She finally arrived at the goal of her journey.

“I'll turn Elder Brother back to how you were. So.....”

“Fine, try it.”

Ran answered softly. It was an extremely soft tone for Ran who had slaughtered the town's people together with Karis.

“Haaaah.....”

Ara collected her energy then charged in front right away. Her legs looked like they just kicked the ground then she was already cutting across the air. Ara stepped on the air to instantly close the distance between her and Ran then made a sharp stab. Ran wasn't even able get up from the throne at Ara's swift attack.

Spear tip perfectly aimed at Ran's neck flew in.

Pause.

“.....”

Ara stopped her stab right in front of Ran's neck. Skin on Ran's neck got cut from being slightly grazed by the spear tip and a drop of blood oozed out.

“What's wrong?”

“That's.....”

Ran will die if she stabbed him like this. Ara who had been pressing her spear on Ran's neck quickly withdrew the spear and backed up.

She wanted to turn Ran back into Aren. Not kill him.

“Why are you just sitting there and not fighting back?”

“To turn me back into Aren, you have to defeat me while I'm fighting with my full capacity. Is this what Eun told you?”

“.....”

Ara didn't know how Ran knew about this, but she nodded. To separate Aren before he completely became Ran, she had to make Ran fight with his full capacity then shatter Ran's soul to return Aren's soul back to normal. This was the method Eun told her.

“Those words are not wrong.”

“Then why.....?”

Thus, stabbing Ran who wasn't fighting back meant he'll just die as Ran. During her journey, Ara had only worried about her skills not being enough to defeat Ran.... she had never imagined Ran not resisting.

Wasn't it obvious? Demon or not, why would anyone sit still and let someone kill you?

“Because the end of time is approaching.”

“Pardon me?”

“I’ll explain it in a way you can understand. It doesn’t matter if you try to stab me. But if you try to again and fail, I’ll go to Hamel. Think about it carefully.”

“What do you mean.....?”

“You cannot stop me.”

Would Ara’s strength be enough to stop Ran if he made up his mind to destroy Hamel? It would be too much even in Celestial Fox state.

“But I won’t do anything long as you stay here. That’s the condition.”

“.....”

Tip of Ara’s spear shook. She couldn’t kill Ran. But Ran was warning that he’ll kill everyone in Hamel.....if she tried to threaten him despite this.

Just like how he turned the village that Ara grew up in into a sea of blood.

“Elder Brother..... you already harmed countless amount of people. But you’re still saying such things?”

“So what are you going to do about it?”

Ran got up from the throne. Cold footsteps rang across Hall of Water.

“Will you stab me with that spear? Are you going to kill me to appease the souls of those that I killed?”

“.....”

She had never even thought once about killing Aren. Ara got scared then stepped back as Ran approached her.

But Ran’s steps were faster.

“You cannot stop me or kill me. You also cannot revive those that I killed. You cannot do anything.”

“.....”

He was right. Visions ran by her head in that moment..... Ara had already seen how powerful Ran was every night in her dreams.

Difference between Ara and Ran's strength was way too big.....and even if Ran didn't resist like he did before, Ara couldn't take his life.

When Ara stood still shaking, Ran stretched out his hand to grab Ara's chin. Ara couldn't even turn her head away to avoid his gaze anymore.

"So stay here with me."

".....Elder Brother."

Ara couldn't decide on what she should do. While Ara was in turmoil unable to decide, Ran whispered heartlessly.

"Let's watch the end of time together with me from here."

Darkness that gathered on the tip of Ran's hand consumed Ara.

Before she had any time to decide.

Before she had any moment to be scared.

Into deep darkness.

Ice cave leading to the Temple of Water. The El Search Party sent the Velder Knights back to Hamel and they were now passing through the cave in order to head towards the Temple of Water.

"This reminds me of the time when we went to capture Banthus."

"It sure does."

Elsword and Rena were walking in front and talking. It was a relaxing conversation considering they were heading into the enemy territory but Add didn't mind the two talking.

His mind was occupied with looking at Eve's back as she walked in front.

"....."

It was probably obvious, but Eve hadn't said a word to Add ever since that time. Eve had been treating him unusually kindly recently. But now things were back to point zero.

Actually Add was feeling very regretful about it. Did he lose something important because of his pointless stubbornness? Did he miss a very rare and important opportunity? Did he mess the whole

thing up because he was too confused about finding out that he had been shaken up all this time because he was looking at Eve and not her attires?

The questions continued endlessly in his head. His body was walking but his mind was wandering up in the air. When Add let out a groan unconsciously, Eve took a slight look back towards him.

In that instant, Add turned to glare at the cave wall as if it was his sworn enemy. Seeing that Add was displaying intense hostility towards the wall, Eve looked at him for a bit then turned her head forwards again.

“.....”

Just what was this? Was this a situation as if a little kid was stubbornly refusing to apologize after causing trouble? It was stupid, but Add realized that the comparison wasn't too different after examining his own thought patterns.

“Tch.....”

Add clicked his tongue as he forcefully broke his gaze away from Eve. Then he made eye contact with a boy who was following behind him. It was Chung.

“Come to think of it, why are you following us?”

“I'm sorry.”

Add pressed his palm down on his forehead when Chung apologized politely.

Add thought that Chung will go back with the Velder Knights but it had already been decided beforehand that he will act together with the El Search Party. Rena must have allowed it.

“I know you want to get revenge..... But we'll prioritize Ara first.”

“I'm also intending on helping with that.”

Chung spoke softly while looking at Add.

“My life was saved thanks to you Mr.Add. So would you allow me to help you this time?”

“Do whatever you want.”

Chung must be feeling thankful about how Add evacuated Chung when he was unconscious from Karis' attack.

This felt like a great opportunity so Add added a condition.

“But promise instead that you won't act rashly when Ran is in front of you. I won't let things go if the plan is ruined from you acting rashly. I'm going to return with everyone alive. I'll get rid of you first if you are going to get in the way of this.”

“I promise.”

Chung nodded without any hesitation at Add’s warning. He must have finished making up his mind while Add was unconscious.

“I was able to survive thanks to Mr.Add and also Ms.Ara. It will be difficult to withhold my emotions against Ran..... But I’ll help you two much as I can for now.”

“.....I’ll look forward to it.”

Add was all open arms if Chung was serious about this. His strength to wield a giant destroyer, and his skills of supporting together with Rena from the back was top notch.

The El Search Party was composed of Ara and Elsword who were in charge of close quarter combat, Add and Eve carrying out multiple tasks in the middle and Rena who was in charge of long range support..... Now their long range firepower had been increased significantly from Chung joining.

“We’ll be able to see the Temple of Water if we pass through this cave.”

“There’s almost no attacks from the demons.”

“Yes, this path isn’t too well known after all. But.....”

Chung spoke this then took a deep breath as he aimed his Destroyer 45 degrees forwards. Elsword and Rena who were in front noticed this and quickly moved aside. Chung nodded as a sign of apology then fired a cannonball up at the ceiling.

Boom!!

Icicles that were hanging on the ceiling shattered. Add looked up wondering what was going on and then his face quickly turned pale. Countless amounts of spiders dropped down from the hole that was created after the ceiling was shattered.

“Blegh.....”

“There’s so many.”

Elsword and Rena also looked up and were startled.

“They lie in ambush inside their eggs amongst the icicles then drop down if a traveler passes by below. You cannot see them well normally.”

Chung spoke this then shot one more time to get rid of the spiders. Add frowned then groaned.

“It’s a sight I never want to see again.”

“I’m sorry, but we’ll have get past these couple more times.”

Eve who had been watching silently said something out of the blue.

“Ara Haan might have fainted if she saw this.”

“Yes, she hated spiders.”

Didn't she get frightened and cling to Add inside Banthus' Cave? Add who had been unknowingly reminiscing the past event suddenly realized that he just conversed with Eve. Eve must have realized the same and stared at Add's face for a bit then turned her gaze forwards.

“Let's hurry up and get out of here.”

Just like Chung said, spiders were laying in ambush in couple more locations. But they were all cleaned up neatly by Chung's cannonballs. Actually, the spiders weren't that threatening but the fact that they felt unpleasant to directly use weapons on and that there were so many of them was bothersome. But Chung's Destroyer could handle both of these issues.

Thanks to him, the El Search Party could pass through the ice cave without having to fight the spiders directly.

“That ahead must be the Temple of Water. Let's all wear our coats.”

At Rena's words, everyone except Eve wore the coats that they prepared beforehand. Just as they heard, there was a snow storm blowing near the Temple of Water.

“It will be difficult to move freely if we're wearing things like this.”

“It's been said that it's not cold inside the Temple itself. So we can take them off inside.”

“Big Sister Ara must be suffering. Let's hurry!”

“Add, do you have a plan?”

Add shook his head sideways at Eve's business like question. Temple of Water was their final goal. But it was a building that had been built so long ago that they had almost no information about its interiors.

“Then allow me to suggest. Let's go in first and have a look around the surroundings together. Then depending on the situation, you'll find Ara and escape. Then we'll retreat as well.

“.....”

“Let's do that after examining the situation inside.”



Rena mediated in between them when Add made a face as if he wasn't too keen on Eve's plan. Add didn't know what was going on inside the Temple of Water either so he had to admit Eve's suggestion was reasonable.

Ran or Karis wouldn't jump out at them suddenly right? There shouldn't be any problems if he located Ara soon as possible.

"Then let me lead the way."

The El Search Party followed Chung's guidance and headed towards the Temple of Water.

She felt warmth amidst the darkness.

Ara who had been holding on to her blurry consciousness opened her eyes. Large and warm hand was stroking her head. She wanted to give herself over to this generous hand and go back to sleep absentmindedly..... But an unpleasant feeling coming from her heart telling her that something was wrong didn't let her fall asleep.

Also, she still had her spear in her hand. Her mind started to wake from the familiar sensation of her spear.

"Elder.....Brother."

"You're awake."

Ara immediately came to her senses at Ran's words. The hand that was on top of her head right now was Ran's. Ran was sitting on the chair and Ara had been asleep while leaning on the chair's armrest.

Ran had his eyes closed and was deep in thought. Ara saw his face then added strength to the grip on her spear. But she couldn't continue to the next step. If Ara made up her mind.....it wouldn't be difficult for her to take Ran's life right now.

But that wasn't what Ara wanted. Also, Hamel will turn into ashes if she failed for some reason.

".....Why are you doing this?"

Her thoughts were still complicated. Ran answered calmly when Ara who still couldn't decide on what to do asked with much difficulty.

"To achieve what I desire."

"Just what is that? Why do you have to do all this?"

"You wouldn't understand even if I told you in this time."

Ara stared at Ran with a hurt expression when Ran cut off the conversation. Even though there had been Karis' meddling, Ran didn't look particularly troubled or pained from becoming a demon.

"Do you.....not regret becoming a demon?"

"I'll do anything in order to achieve my goal."

"....."

Although she didn't know what that goal was, she knew that it contained a will that Ran wouldn't hesitate no matter how much blood was spilt during the process. Didn't Ran actually hurt many people already?

Ara backed out to distance herself from Ran while still shaking. She then stabbed the ground with her spear.

Wouldn't leaving Ran like this bring about a disaster to the world? Could it be that Elder Brother Aren doesn't exist anymore? If that's the case.....wouldn't destroying Ran for the sake of the world be the righteous thing to do?

"If you're going to do it, don't fail."

Ran answered dully as if he read Ara's mind.

"If you have a killing intent, hide it. Key to our Haan family's style is swiftness. It's based on being faster than anything while not making any unnecessary movements. Spear arts, windwalking, energy arts, shadow and exorcism all have their key point in speed."

"....."

"Dispatch your enemies before they even notice your attack, faster than anyone, without haste. Taking life like the falling flower petal, this is the truth of Haan family's martial arts."

It was the same tone as long ago when Aren was teaching young Ara. Strength left Ara. She couldn't hold on to her spear anymore.

She couldn't do it after all. She had no courage to point her spear towards this person. No, she could point her spear but she didn't have the resolve to take his life.

Ran finally opened his eyes when Ara dropped her spear with shaking hands.

"Look at your appearance right now."

"Ah....."

At Ran's words, Ara finally looked at her own appearance then became horrified. Tight attire with the same color as Ran's. More of all, there were horns on her head.

“.....”

Ara's face turned pale as she touched the horns. She didn't want to say it no matter what..... But her appearance couldn't be described as anything else but a demon.

But Ran denied.

“You did not become a demon. You're just wearing the shadow in your heart. It's a cheap act that this broken time is creating.”

“But.....”

But what else could her appearance be but a demon? Anyone who saw her right now would say at a single glance that she was a demon. Seeing Ara continue to shake in horror, Ran laughed coldly.

“Demon isn't something that's so easy to become. Relax.”

“.....Just what did you do to me?”

“I already told you. It's only the shadow in your heart coming out to the surface.”

“That's.....”

“No one ever looks closely into their own shadow. But you've become able to look at it closely.”

Her changed appearance was confusing but Ran's words must be true. There was no reason for him to lie.

This appearance that's ever so similar to Ran.....this was what she truly wanted? Wanting to be beside Ran even if she had to change herself like this was her true desire? After struggling so much to figure out if defeating Ran would be the just thing to do. Her choice in the end was this?

It would.....rather have been better if Ran had forcefully turned her into a demon to make her like this.

Ara unconsciously thought this as she dropped down and knelt on the ground. Her heart felt so painful as if it was getting torn apart.....But there were no tears.

Her journey was over. Staying in this spot, with this appearance that's so similar to Ran was her end.

This was the ending she truly wanted.

“Come here.”

“.....”

Ara winced and didn't move when Ran called her with a hand gesture. But Ran's voice that continued was ever so kind.

As if it was from a dream.

“Come here, Ara.”

“.....Yes.”

As if mesmerized, Ara slowly walked on her knees then sat on the chair’s armrest with her back towards Ran. Then Ran put his hand on Ara’s head and sighed.

Warm hand, it hasn’t changed despite how he became a demon.

“You don’t have to think or worry anymore. Let’s watch the time end from here together.....”

“.....”

“I’ll stop killing humans if you don’t want me to. Just stay beside me. This is my reward to you.....for coming all the way here to find me.”

Ara nodded vaguely at Ran’s words when he withdrew his hand from her head. She couldn’t decide before because her heart had been worried and lost. But she couldn’t refuse Ran’s words now since she knew what form her heart actually had.

She wanted to be together with Ran even if she had to become like him. Even if this wasn’t the righteous choice.....

Also, Ran promised that he won’t harm humans anymore if Ara stayed beside her.

There shouldn’t be any problem now if she stayed like this forever.....

Ara slowly closed her eyes. She wanted to forget everything and continue to sleep. Forever.

“We have visitors.”

At Ran’s sudden words, Ara who was about to fall asleep abruptly came to her senses. She got an ominous feeling. Ran wasn’t looking at Ara anymore.

“They are people you were traveling with.”

“Ah.....”

Ara’s eyes opened widely after hearing that the El Search Party was here. How come? They came here despite knowing fully well how dangerous it was?

But Ran didn’t give them any time.

“Then, shall I go clean up the rats that are disturbing the household?”

“W, wait! Elder Brother!!”



Even if this wasn't the righteous choice.....

Ara quickly got up from her seat and begged.

“I’ll, I’ll send them back! So please stay back!!”

“You?”

The El Search Party will die if Ran went to face them. It was a scene that Ara had seen numerous times in her dreams. Ara going to face them instead will guarantee the El Search Party’s safety.

“Yes, I beg you Elder Brother. Do not harm them. Please.....”

“.....”

When Ara begged desperately, Ran nodded after a moment.

“Do as you’d like. But finish it quickly.”

“.....Yes, thank you.”

After getting the permission, Ara started walking with the spear in her hand. She was hesitant at first but her mind was settled as she continued to walk.

That’s right. She had to send the El Search Party back safely.

Although having to show them this changed appearance was embarrassing..... It was still far better than those people getting hurt.

After entering the Temple of Water, the El Search Party advanced slowly while carefully scanning the temple’s inner structure. They had expected it to be crawling with demons since it was the enemy’s main base..... But unlike their expectations, they didn’t encounter too many demons.

It was to the point of a Shadow Sniper or two appearing once in a while. They were cleaned up easily by Chung’s cannonball and Rena’s arrow.

“It’s creepy.”

“There are too little enemies.”

Add agreed with what Elsword and Eve were saying. They came heavily prepared because they obviously thought there would be a large scale battle. But disappointingly, only small fries appeared once in a while.

“Let’s still be careful.”

At Rena's words, the El Search Party advanced while still being on guard for traps. Add tried pondering in Karis and Ran's perspectives to figure out what they were thinking but he couldn't come to any conclusions.

Finally, a long tunnel ended and they arrived at a wide open hall. Just when the El Search Party members were about to breathe a sigh of relief..... Rena aimed her bow forwards.

"Someone is coming."

Just as she said, they could hear footsteps approaching. They were quiet footsteps but this hall was so silent that the sound of the footsteps rang out loudly.

This was enemy territory. Anyone they encounter here would obviously be their enemy.

Just when the El Search Party were preparing for battle..... Rena suddenly lowered her bow.

"It's alright everyone."

"What do you mean?"

Add couldn't understand what she meant and asked. He then figured out what Rena meant when he looked at the figure that appeared around the corner.

The one who was walking across the hall towards them was Ara.

"Big Sister Ara!"

Elsword tried to quickly run up to Ara but Eve grabbed his collar to stop him. Add also frowned and examined Ara's condition. Ara wasn't wearing her usual clothes and was wearing an attire similar to Ran instead.

Most of all, there were horns on her head.

".....Is she a demon?"

Add couldn't deny the words Chung said in shock. Elsword also noticed the horns on Ara's head and stopped.

The El Search Party didn't let down their guard because they couldn't tell if this was the real Ara. Ara must have realized this too and stopped her steps 10 meters away from the group.

"Hello everyone, have you been well?"

The way she bowed politely to greet them, Add sensed that this Ara wasn't fake so he replied bluntly.

"I can't say that I've been well. What's with that getup?"

"This is....."

Ara seemed to hesitate then bit her lower lips. She shook her head then made eye contact with each of the El Search Party members. She then opened her mouth heavily.

“I’m sorry everyone, but please go back.”

“What?”

“Big Sister Ara?”

Add and Elsword reacted as if they couldn’t understand. Rena frowned lightly then raised her bow.

“She must be brainwashed.....”

“No! It’s not something like that!!”

Ara sorrowfully shook her head. The El Search Party closed their mouths after realizing from her voice that she was being honest.

“I’m sorry. But please go back....”

“Explain it in a way we can understand. Although I’m sure such an explanation doesn’t exist.”

Even while scolding, Add was seeing through how the situation was turning out. One of the suggestions he gave to Elsword when he was lost and wavering, betray the humans and remain beside Elesis.

Ara had chosen the measure that Elsword refused.

“Elder Brother Aren.....said he won’t harm any more people if I stay here. So.....”

“So you’re telling us to turn back and leave?”

At Chung’s question, Ara bit her lips with a pained expression. Reproach especially from Chung should be very painful for her.

When Ara didn’t answer, Chung looked towards Add. It meant that he will leave the decision up to Add. He was keeping the promise he made before they came here.

“So you’re telling us that, I’ll live here happily ever after together with Ran so please go back?”

“.....”

Ara didn’t answer but that was basically the answer. Add snorted as if to tell Ara to listen up.

“Don’t make me laugh. We’re not here to get you. We’re here to defeat that eyesore of a demon and drag you back if we have some leftover time. We’re not here to ask for your opinion.”

“But Mr.Add.....you should know why I’m doing this!”



Her voice was filled with blame. Add did understand what Ara was thinking. The future where the El Search Party was annihilated by Ran, Ara had seen this already and was trying to prevent it.

Yes, he at least understood that feeling. Add had been the same as well.

“You’re not making any sense. That’s something I’ll take care of on my own. Your petty resolve isn’t going to change my methods, you idiot.”

“.....”

In a rare moment, anger rose up in Ara’s face. But she immediately made a face as if she was repenting then shook her head.

“No matter what you say, I cannot let you pass.”

“Then we’ll go through you.”

Eve spoke as she stepped forward then stared straightly at Ara.

“Ara Haan, we are here to bring you back. We’ll bring you back even if you refuse. And while we’re here, we’re going to punish Ran who’s been doing bad things.”

“.....”

It probably wasn’t intentional but what Eve just said right now was cute. Add forcefully put strength on his lips so they wouldn’t curve upwards.

“So stand aside, you can stay back if it’s difficult for you to point your spear against Ran.”

“.....Even if it’s Ms.Eve or Mr.Add, I cannot back away from here. No matter what.”

As if she already made up her mind, Ara was grabbing her spear tightly and steadying her breath. She was determined to not stand aside.

As if responding to her resolve, shadow under Ara’s feet looked like it was getting longer then stood on its own two legs. This dark shadow didn’t have any facial features.....but its outline was exactly the same as Ara.

“.....Did she make a clone of herself using her shadow?”

It wasn’t an ability that Ara had before. Just when Add became alert and was thinking of a way to counter it..... A clear voice rang across the Temple of Water.

“We’re not done talking, Ara Haan.”

Eve shook her head as she approached Ara. She was completely defenceless, she walked forward confidently with her back straight as if she will let herself be hit if Ara stabbed with her spear. Add got surprised by this and quickly stuck close to her.

He didn't know what Eve was thinking but he had to stop her if it became necessary. Just when Add was preparing to activate the dimension distortion just in case, Eve stopped at a distance where Ara's spear would reach.

"It's pointless for us to fight."

".....I cannot let you all pass through here."

Ara spoke depressingly but didn't withdraw her spear.

"Why? I heard that in the first place, you were traveling with us in order to meet with Ran and turn him back into Aren. Why did you give up on that goal?"

"That's....."

Ara couldn't continue her words because Eve hit the mark. Give up, that's right. She also knew that this was giving up.

This right now wasn't the righteous path.

".....I cannot say."

"Why can't you?"

Tip of Ara's spear shook when Eve asked calmly.

How Ran had harmed innocent people, Chung's resentment, possibility of the future she's been seeing..... Everything was intermingling complicatedly that she couldn't organize them.

"If I'm not sufficient enough to talk about this, how about you talk with somebody else? Rena, will you talk with Ara Haan instead of me?"

"I think it's better for you to continue talking Eve."

"Is that so?"

Rena was thinking of leaving this to Eve since she was being so assertive about it. Eve nodded then turned her gaze back to Ara.

"Why are you trying to stop us from meeting Ran?"

"That's because all of you....."

Ara shook thinly then continued her words with much difficulty.

"Cannot beat Elder Brother."

"Do you really think so?"

Her foresight ability was active even in this moment. How Add was preparing for a dimension distortion, how Chung was alert trying to jump in and defend Eve if it became necessary. She could see everything as if they were all on top of her palm.

And this amazing power.....was telling her what would happen if Ran and the El Search Party confronted each other.

“You think that we’ll lose when we fight Ran. That’s why you’re stopping us. Am I right Ara Haan?”

“.....Yes, that’s right.”

No one joined in between Eve and Ara’s conversation. While everyone was watching, Eve took one more step forward.

Eve was now within the range of Ara’s spear. Ara who had been extremely alert instinctively tried to move her spear but realized who the target was and barely managed to stop. Eve asked coldly towards Ara who was letting out a sigh of relief.

“Why do you think that we’ll lose when we fight?”

“.....Because you people are weak.”

It wasn’t something she wanted to say. The El Search Party that Ara had spent her days together with wasn’t weak at all. Rather, they were an ideal group that covered for each other’s weaknesses and fought together by joining their strengths.

It was enjoyable to fight together with them.

It was great to see Elsword become stronger day by day and Eve’s on point support was dependable. How Rena cleaned up everything with just a single arrow was beautiful and plans that Add put forth were marvellous.

She was happy that she could fight in their front line.

She could fight together with them just a couple days ago..... But now she couldn’t. While barely holding back the tears welling up in her eyes, Ara shook her head heavily.

“No, that’s not true. You people aren’t weak. Elder Brother is just too strong. He’s too powerful.....”

“No, I’m actually weak.”

Ara’s eyes widened at these unexpected words. But Eve was speaking with a tone as if she was analyzing herself realistically.

“My role in the El Search Party is supporting with mid-range firepower. But everyone should already know that I lack firepower for the job.”

“T, that’s not true! Ms.Eve had always fought very well!”

“Thank you for those words but that’s not an objective evaluation. I’m weak.”

Add agreed internally to Eve’s calm words. Well actually....you couldn’t say that Eve was strong. Her completeness as a Nasod was best ever in the history but that didn’t mean she was the strongest Nasod.

It was more along the lines of she fought well despite not being a combat purpose Nasod.

“But that’s not the issue here.”

“Huh?”

“We fought regardless, there were times when we won and times when we lost. Our fight with Karis before was actually a loss as well. Since we lost you.”

“That’s.....”

Ara was flustered and couldn’t answer. Eve opened her eyes then continued her words.

“If we lost this time, we just have to win next time. I think that’s a good phrase.”

“.....”

Add scratched his head. He felt embarrassed for some reason.

“We lost last time so we came here to win this time. So will you assist us Ara Haan?”

Ara stared blankly at the hand Eve held out towards her. Her shadow clone had disappeared before she realized. Eve held out her hand towards her and waited silently.

Ara who had been entranced by that hand came to her senses late and shook her head.

“No, you can’t. Ms.Eve, I can see already. If you fight Elder Brother, all of you will certainly be.....”

“I’m asking you to help us so it won’t turn out like that.”

Ara’s gaze shook. She was anxiously looking at the hand Eve held out towards her. However, just when she was about to open her mouth..... a laugh filled with void suddenly rang across the hall.

“Kuheheheheh.....Hahahahaha!!

“.....Be careful!! Ms.Eve!”

Ara immediately threw her body to push Eve away. Add who had been standing ready behind Eve caught her as she suddenly flew into him. But he couldn’t withstand her weight and got pushed back far. But he didn’t have any time to ponder about Eve’s weight.

Since with a swipe of sword aura, a dark skinned demon appeared in the place where Eve had been standing.

“Ran!!”

Chung instantly fired a cannonball but when Ran held up his hand, a dark shadow rose up to become a barrier than guarded his surroundings. An intense explosion was created but not even a single hair of Ran was scathed. When Ran swung his sword to respond, the shadow barrier rushed towards Chung and caused an explosion on impact.

“Ugh!”

It was such a fast counter attack that Chung gave up dodging and defended by raising his Destroyer. He managed to block it but it was quite a powerful attack that it pushed his body back far.

Ran snorted after displaying to Chung who was superior with a single exchange of offense and defense.

“You are Helputt’s son? Your skills are lacking compared to your father.”

“Elder Brother! I said I’ll handle this. Why did you come out?!”

“I got bored while waiting for things to end.....”

Ran raised his sword and murmured in a hazy voice.

“I’m going to erase you all.”

“.....Everyone, get ready for battle!”

“Let’s go!”

The El Search Party’s fight for Ara started with Add and Elsword’s shout.

Karis was nowhere to be seen. Then the battle was 1 vs many, they had a chance if they cornered him with Elsword at the front!!

While thinking this, Add was about to fire a Void Impact but noticed an abnormally and yelled quickly.

“Renal Support!!”

“I got it!”

Rena also noticed the abnormally and quickly changed the direction of her bow. Shadow under Ran's feet looked like it was squirming then rose up all of a sudden to take the shape of a giant shadow demon.

Shadow Master had been created from Ran's shadow. Not just one, but 3 of them.

"I'm really getting sick of these guys now!"

Add quickly fired a Void Impact at the Shadow Master while giving instructions.

"Elsword! Take Ran just for a bit!"

"Alright!"

Ran made a tired smile when Elsword charged at him.

".....Flame chosen by the El? Well, everything is ending already. It will be fine to kill you."

Elsword didn't give ear to Ran's words and swung his sword widely to aim for Ran's shoulder. But Ran narrowed his eyes then swung his sword to block Elsword's strike. He then swung once again multiple times faster than before to cut across Elsword's chest.

"Ugh?!"

Elsword instinctively sensed the incoming danger and pulled out his body to avoid the incoming second attack. He managed to avoid fatal injury, but severe amount of blood was dripping from the cut across his chest..... He would have certainly fallen if he had dodged even slightly later.

Elsword was shaking even now. It looked like he won't be able to defend properly if Ran attacked again.

"Elsword!"

"Don't break formation Eve! I'll go!"

Eve who was swinging a whip against two Shadow Masters noticed Elsword's danger and tried to join in. Add shouted to stop her then quickly tried to approach Elsword on his Dynamos..... But Chung's sudden attack was faster.

"Haaaah!!"

Chung jumped with his Destroyer in front of him then tried to smash down. But Ran smiled as he moved slightly out of the attack's radius. At Ran's movement that looked like it was mocking him, Chung clenched his teeth then tried to charge at Ran again by holding the Destroyer in front of him. But for some reason he stopped then took up a guarding position.

"You're not attacking son of Helputt?"

“.....”

Chung only groaned in vexation and didn't charge at Ran. If he charged in, Elsword who haven't managed to recover yet will become defenceless. Seeing that Chung was firmly guarding his position, Ran made a vague smile as he positioned his sword.

“Then shall I attack instead?”

Chung and Ran's were confronting each other for a short while. Add arrived at Elsword using this moment and quickly examined Elsword's condition. Thankfully, Elsword was getting up on his own strength. Even though he was bleeding, he wasn't injured to the point where he couldn't continue to fight.

“Haaaaa.....”

“Here, potion.”

Elsword quickly grabbed the potion Add threw at him then put in on his chest wound. He then held his sword firmly with two hands again. He almost died just now but the fighting spirit in his eyes hasn't dwindled even a bit.

“Ran, he's really strong.”

“He's still weaker than Elesis.”

“You think so too right?”

No matter how strong he was, he was still weaker than Elesis.

Elsword was about to rush in again after gaining his confidence. Then a sound of metal creaking was heard as Chung came sliding backwards to stop right in front of them. Chung had managed to block Ran's entire flurry of strikes but he got pushed back due to the sheer power of his attacks.

“Mr.Add, what should we do now?”

“This is unexpected. You're not suggesting that we attack him head on?”

“I made a promise after all. Also.....it's frustrating but he's not an opponent that can be beaten so easily.”

Chung was calmly putting aside the burning rage inside him. Add read his will and grinned. He was quite a decent guy for manipulating.

“Alright, then shall we go shatter that stupid demon's horn?”

“I have to go in front right?”

“No, approach slowly with me. Chung, stand by then bombard him. You’ll be able to tell the timing on your own.”

Add patted Elsword’s back as they both headed towards Ran. Rena and Eve couldn’t move from their positions because they were facing the Shadow Masters and minions they spawned. Ara was far away at a loss for what she should do.

“Do you remember what Ara did when we first met Chung? This is the applied version.”

“What? What do you mean?”

He’s not getting it even when the plan was explained to him. Add sighed then spoke simply.

“Just go cut him down when I tell you to.”

“Alright, got it.”

Elsword would have normally rushed in but now he was following Add’s lead and was slowly approaching Ran.

Closing the distance this slowly when a fierce battle was occurring around them was something that tested their patience..... It even made Ran frown.

“You’re acting too leisurely.”

As Ran said this, shadow beneath him shook again then two more Shadow Masters appeared. Now there were total of five Shadow Masters, there was too much for Eve and Rena to handle.

Shadow Masters could continue to spawn long as Ran was still standing. They would obviously want to try and take Ran down quickly as possible. But even though Rena and Eve were getting pushed back, Add and Elsword had their feet planted firmly on the ground and were approaching as if they were slowly sliding across.

“.....I don’t know what you’re thinking but.”

Ran dashed in gracefully as if he was skating on ice. A swift sword strike, it was too much for Elsword who fell behind in speed to handle directly.

Just when Ran was rushing in to cut both of them down at once, Add smiled in satisfaction.

“Well, that was easy.”

Clank!! Dimensional distortion barrier that Add had calculated beforehand activated. Dimensional distortion barrier had the effects to reduce physical shock and it could be used to protect allies. But it wasn’t invincible. It got shattered from Elesis’ Blood Cutter and Karis’ Death Strike.



While it had a very impressive defensive ability, it wasn't very useful against general class enemies.....- who said that was true?

With a shattering sound, Ran's sword got deflected up from the dimension distortion barrier that appeared all of a sudden. The barrier got shattered a bit but it didn't break just from a single hit!

Add grinned in satisfaction at how things went as he planned.

“Go!”

Elsword knew what he had to do the moment when the dimension distortion barrier came up. The frustration that he felt back then when he couldn't do anything but to watch Ara get arrested, Elsword put this emotion in his sword as he kicked the ground with his full strength and dashed towards Ran.

The dimensional distortion barrier..... didn't have any feature to prevent people inside from leaving.

“Ugh?!”

After getting his attack blocked and deflected by a strange barrier then seeing Elsword using this chance to rush towards him, Ran tried to quickly turn his sword around. But Elsword's actions were faster this time!!

Slash!

Blood splattered with a sound of flesh tearing. Elsword's strike cut across Ran's side and caused a critical damage. Even while injured, Ran quickly held up his sword and blocked Elsword's continuing attacks. But in that moment, Add who withdrew the dimension distortion barrier fired a Void Impact.

“Kugh!!”

Ran turned his head to dodge the Void Impact but he couldn't stop his horn from getting shattered. Ran's face that had been filled with confidence before became enraged. Ran quickly created a wall of shadow to block Elsword's attack then backed off to collect his breath.

When Ran pressed his hand on his side, shadow started to fill Ran's wounds. But in that moment, Chung who had been standing ready raided him with cannonballs.

“Ugh!”

Cannonballs didn't end with just one shot and continued to explode on him. Ran was trying to focus on recovering so he made a painful cry as he curled his body up to minimize the damage.

“Don't give him any room! Elsword and I will finish this!!”

This was a great opportunity. They'll storm Ran and crush him while he's in a disadvantage. Add instructed Elsword to run at Ran as he rushed in as well.

"Be careful!!"

Ara's sharp warning was heard. Was this a warning about Ran? Or.....

Add's brain immediately started analyzing but the prey in front was way too enticing to pass up. They couldn't back out when the chance to capture the wounded lion was right in front of them!

"Reverse.....Gravity!!"

In that moment, Ran opened his eyes wide then a magic circle was activated around him. Elsword and Add's body as they were rushing in suddenly started to float up helplessly.

"Huh! What is this?!"

".....Oh, I forgot about this."

Add recognized the skill late and tried to escape quickly but his body couldn't move freely in this reverse-gravity state. Add gave up escaping and quickly calculated the space coordinates to create a dimension distortion barrier that covered both Elsword and him.

Slaaaash!!

A frightening sound effect was heard. The trace Ran's sword drew in the air tore the space apart as it made a horrifying sound. It felt like they heard a sound of paper tearing as Ran swung his sword, then the shock got transferred to the two inside the barrier.

"Kugh!"

"Aaah!"

Elsword and Add both fell backwards and rolled on the floor. They were safe only because the damage had been mitigated by the barrier. They would have died instantly otherwise.

Elsword and Add who fell and rolled on the floor immediately tried to stand back up. Their bodies were aching from the bruises but the fight wasn't going to wait for them to recover. Chung came running to guard the two from Ran while they stood up.

Ran spoke in a sinister way after covering the wound on his side with shadows.

"You guys this time are pretty strong. But there's no use. Everything will end soon."

"I do not understand what you mean."

There was a flash of light then long screams of Shadow Masters were heard. Eve was positioned behind Ran while pompously brushing back her hair.

Rena had gathered all of the Shadow Masters in one place then Eve had cleaned all five of them up at once. This would have been impossible for Eve from before. This firepower was possible because this was Eve who had been enhanced from awakening to Memory of Time and Space.

“We are not particularly interested in you. We’ll take Ara Haan back and defeat you while at it.”

“Is everyone alright?”

Rena put her hands on Add and Elsword’s shoulders as she asked worriedly. It must have been difficult to lure five Shadow Masters but Rena was only sweating a bit. Not a single strand of her hair was harmed.

“This is nothing!”

“Shall we end this?”

Add and Elsword straightened their backs and stood up. Eve behind him and the other Search Party members in front of him, Ran was completely surrounded. Their fight up till now should have confirmed that the El Search Party’s firepower could easily stomp on Ran’s defenses plus the Shadow Masters he summoned.

Eve confirmed this fact then took a slight look behind her. Ara was looking at her with a deathly pale face.

“Don’t worry, Ara Haan. We’ll win.”

“No.....No! please don’t, Elder Brother!!”

Ara shook her head as she screamed deplorably. The Search Party members got an ominous feeling from this and all looked towards Ran.

Ran was laughing as his shoulders shook.

“Yes, there should be this kind of turnout sometimes. But.....”

While Ran was speaking incomprehensible words, his shadow stood up on its two legs. It was the same technique Ara had shown before. Just when Add was about to order an attack.....the number of shadows increased.

From one to two, two to four, four to eight, eight to sixteen.....

“.....What?”

Rans’ clones continued to multiply. Add felt a chill from this and quickly opened up the dimension distortion barrier.

“Eve! You block on that side too!”

“Black.....”

Ran’s cold voice rang out across the hall. Then his shadows also followed after him and shouted as well.

“Black....” “Black....” “Black....” “Black....” “Black....”

“Destiny!!”

Soon as Ran swung his sword, demonic energy stretched out forwards and swept over Add and the other Search Party members. Add managed to block it because he already had the barrier up. But the problem was..... this wasn’t ending with just a single wave.

Demonic energy continued to strike. Add groaned after seeing the cracks slowly appear on the distortion barrier.

“Kuuugh!”

Although the El Search Party’s firepower could overwhelm Ran’s defenses plus his ability to summon minions, the opposite was true as well. Ran’s firepower could crush the El Search Party’s defenses!

“Mr.Add! Will you be okay?”

Chung quickly grabbed hold of Add and shouted. Add swallowed his scream as he shook his head.

It was a power that surpassed Death Strike. Not being able to see what was going on outside the dimension distortion barrier due to the continued waves of Black Destiny made him even more anxious. He couldn’t get a grasp on when this ceaseless storm of demonic energy would end.

Elsword and Rena must have realized Add’s thoughts because they stuck close together to reduce the distance between them much as they could. Thanks to this, the area Add had to defend with the distortion barrier decreased and took some burden off him.... But Black Destinies were continuing to strike.

How many clones were there again? Was it 32? What was this time.....? Was it the 20th one?

Just when Add was continuing to count in his head while clenching his teeth..... Just when larger and clearer cracks were starting to form on the dimension distortion barrier, the storm of Black Destinies finally ended.

“Huff, huff.....”

Even though Add no longer had the strength to maintain the barrier, he still maintained it with sheer willpower as he examined the situation. Ran and his 32 clones were still there. Ran shook his head sorrowfully then sighed.

“Trying to challenge D with just this? Fools, I’ll end your lives right here.”

Ran remarked coldly then raised his sword again. 32 shadows followed after him and also prepared to swing their swords.

“Big Brother Add!”

“Don’t talk to me right now! I’ll block it somehow!!”

He seriously wanted to time travel if Eun came out right now. But Ara was at where Eve was and even if she was here, Eun would have intervened already if she wanted to. Eun was almost completely keeping herself out of this Hamel incident.

Asking her about why can come later, survival came first right now!

The problem was that Ran was still leisurely. He looked leisurely enough to do the same attack from before many more times. As if he wanted to prove Add’s worries, Ran shouted again while swinging his sword.

“Black Destiny!!”

Ceaseless wave of demonic energy swept over the El Search Party again.

“Atomic Shield!!”

Eve quickly brought up the shield to block another attack from Ran. This power she obtained from awakening to Memory of Time and Space was much superior than Add’s dimension distortion barrier if you only counted its defensive capabilities.

It was an obvious result since in the first place, Add’s dimensional distortion barrier was intended for time travel. Physical defense was an additional feature.

Their positions were off. Add, Eve and all of the El Search Party members should have stayed all together so they could stack dimensional distortion barrier and Atomic Shield together. They were separated right now.

It was the repeat of the same mistake they made back during their fight with Karis.

“Ms.Eve! Please stop!! I’ll persuade Elder Brother to stop!”

When Eve opened up the Atomic Shield again, Ara behind her called desperately. But Eve firmly shook her head.

“It’s fine. This shield’s has an outstanding defensive capability.”

Unlike what she said, the shield shook and cracks formed on it every time waves of Black Destinies struck. Eve was preparing to open the Atomic Shield again while calculating the period that the waves were hitting.

“This isn’t the end of Elder Brother’s power! He can do much more than this!”

Eve paused after hearing what Ara shouted. It felt like Ara wasn’t wrong. Ran could probably bring out more copies of himself than this and could probably stomp down on the El Search Party using more powerful Black Destinies or some other skills.

Actually even the initial confrontation felt more like he got hit while going easy on them.

“So I beg you. Please stop this.....”

“I refuse.”

At Eve’s cold reply, Ara made a face as if she was about to cry. Unlike the dimension distortion barrier, Atomic Shield’s structure was so that people inside couldn’t go out without Eve’s permission.

After confirming the shield’s durability, Eve turned slightly to look back towards Ara.

“I don’t intend on repeating the same mistake from before. You went out last time saying you’ll bring Add back, and then did something else.”

“That was.....”

Although it was to save Add, she submitted to Karis’ threats. Eve shook her head.

“I have no intention of handing you over to Ran.”

“.....Why? Why is Ms.Eve doing all of this for me?”

“I don’t know myself. No, it would be more of a correct expression to say that I didn’t know.”

Eve spoke calmly then stretched out her hand to repair the Atomic Shield. At her order, Nasod machines flew up and quickly filled up the fissure on the shield.

“What is it that you wanted to do? Was it to stay here together with Ran forever?”

“.....”

Ara couldn’t answer. She never wanted something like this. She just wanted to stop the terrible future of the El Search Party members dying while facing Ran.

A wave of Black Destiny struck again. Eve didn’t waver even for a bit even when the vicious tongue of demonic energy in front was trying to consume her.

“Elsword believed in me when I wanted to give up. So I’ll believe in you this time.”

“Why? Just why.... for me.....?”

“Why did you go outside of the shield to save Add?”

Eve added as if she just remembered.

“I know that it wasn’t because of male-female relationship.”

“Th, that’s.....”

Ara’s face turned red even though this wasn’t the time for it. Eve didn’t mind Ara’s reaction and continued her words.

“When I woke up after hibernating for a long time, it was already after the Nasod Civilization had fallen. The name Nasod had been long forgotten and most people only treated them as stuff of legends.”

“.....”

“I was alone. No, I made a mistake of thinking that I was alone. Elsword had been beside me all along but I realized this too late.”

Her tone was as if she was regretting it quite a bit. Ara was surprised from how Eve was talking like this that she just listened on with a blank expression.

“I don’t intend to be late this time.”

“Ms.Eve.....”

“I’ll say this because I think you’re misunderstanding. You’re not alone, Ara Haan. We have never fought alone. Whether we wanted to or not, we’ve always fought together. But why are you thinking that you have to fight by yourself right now?”

Strangely, there were emotions mixed into Eve’s voice. Ara realized that she was angry.

“The fight in Elder, the fight in Velder, we fought together in those as well. But why are you trying to fight by yourself?”

“That’s.....”

Because the issue with Ran was something she had to settle by herself. Also, because she absolutely didn’t want to see the other Search Party members get killed by Ran.

“Why won’t you believe in us? When I was filled with sense of helplessness in front of that giant Shadow, the one who believed I could defeat it was you. Then how come you won’t believe in us? Do you give up already because you think we’ll lose?”

“.....Ms.Eve.”

Ara's eyes became wet from Eve's words that were filled with resentment. Eve must have thought she spoke too much so she caught her breath.

It was such a human like action.

"I request you, Ara Haan. Please believe in us. And also fight together with us. We will win here. We'll win.....then go back to Velder and fight Elesis one more time."

"....."

"So be together with us in that fight as well. Because we have always been together, because we're....."

Eve hesitated for a while as if she didn't know which word to choose then finally finished her words.

"Precious friends."

".....Ah."

Tears rushed into Ara's eyes soon as she heard those words.

All of her pent up emotions until now, the words she couldn't say, pains she felt from power to look into the future, how she felt lost and stayed up many nights from not being able to find out what justice was, all of these disappeared as if snow was melting away.....then combined into one.

Ara was already grabbing her spear before she realized it. She grasped it tightly. She knew who she had to fight.

"Yes!"

It felt like she knew what justice was.

Ceaseless wave of Black Destinies finally ended. When Ran steadied his breath and withdrew his sword, his clones also withdrew their swords as well. Dimension distortion barrier on Add's side was completely shattered and Add was unconscious being held in Elsword's arms.

Add had already been injured. He was only moving around by injecting anesthetic to himself to suppress his pain. He gave his all to block up till the second wave of Black Destiny. But he lost consciousness right after.

"Hahaha....."

Atomic Shield on Eve's side was still fine but it didn't matter. It will get cleaned up with one more wave of Black Destiny.

"Alright, then....."



In that moment, Atomic Shield got withdrawn and someone stepped forwards. Ran raised his eyebrows to see that it was Ara.

She'll probably beg him to spare the El Search Party. But Ran wasn't intending to listen anymore.

"Elder Brother."

"Yes."

Ran nodded slowly as he held his sword horizontally. He was about to deny right away then use Black Destiny one more time to finish this at once.

"I'm sorry, but I'll.....take you down Elder Brother."

".....Nonsense. You should know the result of this fight already."

"Yes, even so..... I figured it out now."

Ara nodded. Even at this moment Ara could see into the future due to the foresight ability.

The El Search Party will get annihilated if Ran fires Black Destiny one more time.

"I was afraid to fight you Elder Brother. No, I didn't want to harm you. It was also because my strength was lacking. But even if my strength was enough, my goal was to turn you back into Elder Brother Aren."

"So?"

"No matter how much evil you committed, no matter how many people you have harmed.....you were still my elder brother. I thought that it couldn't be helped because you have done all these horrible things while you were a demon. I thought that at least I should be by your side."

"Then why?"

Ara shook her head then collected her breath. She steadied her posture then aimed her spear at the enemy.

"But not anymore. You are not my elder brother. Elder Brother I know isn't like this."

"How selfish. For younger sister to try and define her older brother."

"No! Actually, it doesn't matter if you are Elder Brother or not!"

Ara put strength in her hands as she shouted confidently.

"Slaying evil in the name of justice is the martial artist's duty! Even if it's Elder Brother, I'll defeat you if you've become corrupted and evil."

“Is that the answer you’ve found? Even if it’s me, you’ll slay me if I’m evil?”

“I want to turn Elder Brother back. But if Elder Brother refuses, and if you try to commit any more evil to this world, then I’ll stop you with everything I have! I won’t let you harm the others!”

Ran nodded then drew his sword in the air. It was difficult to control the damage output for Black Destiny. He had to deal with this directly.

“Then come at me. I’ll show you what true despair is.”

“Haaaa.....”

“Back when I was a human, was there ever a time when you beat me?”

With Ran’s cold smile, his clones charged at Ara. Ara also concentrated to call out her own clones but there were only 2. They weren’t capable of handling Ran’s 32 clones.

“Haaaaah!!”

Ara held her spear with long reach then rotated around widely. She launched all of Ran’s clones away with a Full Moon Slash. But Ran came rushing through the copies that were flying away.

What a terrifying speed! He was much faster than Ara!

Ara quickly somersaulted to dodge but Ran didn’t stop his offense. Not only that, but the clones that went flying earlier also landed and all charged towards Ara.

“Iron Scraps!!”

In that moment, Eve threw her body into the fight as she dispersed metal shards around her to launch all the clones away. For Eve who didn’t specialize in close quarter combat to step in front.....? Ara screamed.

“Ms.Eve!!”

“Stay focused, Ara Haan!”

“Guide Arrow!!”

Then Rena’s voice rang out as sound of arrows flying and explosions were heard. Rena and Chung started assisting Eve to sweep through Ran’s clones.

Elsword takes care of Add who was unconscious while anyone who could still move fights!!

Thanks to the others, Ara was able to focus only on Ran and his clones directly nearby. Ara sent her own shadow clones forwards then clashed weapons directly with Ran.

Sparks flew in the air as the spear art of the Haan family and the sword art of the one who was once a Haan family mingled together.

“Your skills improved quite a bit. But you’re still too slow!”

“Ah!”

Ara couldn’t withstand Ran’s continuous attacks and got pushed back. She couldn’t let her guard down even for a moment because Ran was relentlessly pouring in chained strikes. She was raising her spear to block and turning her body to dodge. But her hair got cut and blood sprayed from her skin getting grazed every time she defended.

Such strong and fierce attacks, it didn’t look like she could win no matter what. Not only that, the enemy was her beloved Elder Brother. It would be strange if her resolve didn’t waver.

But.....

“Ara, hang on just a bit longer!”

“We’ll come to assist you right away!”

Her friends that were facing Ran’s clones were shouting at her. Telling her to stay strong just a bit longer, telling her that they’ll come and help if she brought out just a bit more courage.

Ara who was blocking Ran’s fierce attacks suddenly kicked the wall then jumped in a triangular formation in the air. Then she fell down on top of Ran while swinging her spear widely. Ran seemed slightly surprised by this bold attack aiming for his head but blocked it by stepping backwards.

Ara even gave up breathing to charge in and stabbed continuously without a moment of rest. But Ran calmly blocked everything as if her attacks were too slow. He then finally swung his sword widely to throw Ara back.

Ran was superior both in speed and strength. Ara wasn’t a match for him in close quarters. But Ara’s speciality was close quarters combat. Her chances became even lower in a ranged combat.

“I’ll spare at least one of them if you surrender now.”

“No, we’ll all go back together.”

Ara who was panting immediately shook her head to refuse. Ran shook his head as if he couldn’t understand.

“Why are you so desperate? You should know already that your strength is lacking. The result of this fight won’t change. The future is already decided and the time will end.”

“Even so.....”

She could finally understand why Eve was angry and why everyone came all the way here. She wasn't able to clearly describe what this feeling was in words before, but she could say it now.

"Because my friends are with me."

"....."

"Life and death is the path of warriors! I'll move forwards by fighting together with my friends! No matter what kind of future awaits! Even if it turns out to be the path where I have to slay you Elder Brother!"

"I see. Then I'll.....end you here as well."

Ran seemed to have given up persuading because he held his sword straight. Ara tried to internally call Eun but shook her head right away. She couldn't win in her state right now. Not even Eun's Celestial Fox state, not even this form where she was wearing her heart's shadow was match for Ran.

"Heart's shadow....."

This from was the shadow? Ara unknowingly looked down at her feet. She then looked up at the ceiling. The Temple of Water's ceiling had gotten shattered from the battle and light was coming in through the gap to create her shadow.

It was a brilliant sunlight.

"Shadow."

It felt like she could figure something out. Ara thought as she fixed the grip on her spear.

Shadow wouldn't do. She wanted to win as herself. She needed power. She needed greater power in order to move forwards with her friends.

Great light was required to create a great shadow. Then what was that light?

Ara stared for a moment at the people that were battling Ran's clones. Smile unknowingly got drawn on her face.

She finally knew. Why she had been so lost, why it had been so difficult.

It was because she had people she wanted to be together with but it seemed as if she couldn't be together with them anymore. She had been so scared of that happening. She had been so fearful, so worried that she hid, got disheartened and struggled to figure out what she should do.

She had been scared to lose this precious light that she managed to find.

".....It's just like what Mr.Add said. I'm an idiot."

"What?"

“It’s just like what Ms.Eve said.”

Ara closed her eyes. Ran’s blade was in front of her but she wasn’t afraid.

She had thought she was alone but she wasn’t. Everyone came running for her to prove this.

Her heart felt hot. Her heart was beating loudly to forewarn her of change. But she wasn’t scared. Even though her eyes had been closed..... she could feel a radiant light in front of her eyes.

The El that Aisha gave to Ara, the Memory of Time and Space was floating in front of her.

“Here I go.”

Ara let out a low shout as she grabbed the Memory of Time and Space. Her palms heated up as if they were burning as the light enveloped her body. Ara closed her eyes as the orange pillar of light burst through the ceiling.

She wanted to win.

Together with everyone.

The battle paused due to the giant pillar of light that blew away the Temple of Water’s ceiling entirely. Eve, Rena, Chung and Elsword who were facing Ran’s clones also looked towards the pillar of light.

Wrrrrr!

Ara walked out tearing through the pillar of light with her spear. Horns on her head and the attire that looked like Ran was gone.

Ara with a more mature impression than before inhaled lightly as she stared at Ran.

“Prepare yourself, Elder Brother!”

“Hmm.....”

Ran frowned at Ara’s changed appearance then held his sword horizontally. Stance to make a wide slash, all of the Haan family’s spear art was in Ran’s head already.

The core to Haan Family’s martial arts was speed. They were all based on swiftness. The key was to arrive faster than your enemy even if you started late. No matter how fast of an attack Ara uses, Ran will cut her down faster than that.

But soon as Ara kicked the ground.....all of these suppositions became useless.

“Special skill!!”

Ara's form disappeared. No, she didn't disappear..... it looked like she disappeared because she was too fast! Ran felt a chill so he quickly summoned clones around him..... But Ara's spear flashed by even faster.

Ran's clones dropped on the ground like leaves before the wind with each flash of Ara's spear.

“Wha.....”

Ran realized what was going on in this short moment where he didn't even have any time to speak.

Ara had compressed all of her body's energy into her legs and was using her foresight ability up to its limits.....She was attacking by reading her enemy's attacks and movements beforehand.

Currently, her speed had surpassed swiftness and became god speed(神速)!

After cutting down all of Ran's clones in a short time that lasted less than 1 second, Ara grabbed her spear with short reach and stabbed. But Ran desperately managed to raise his sword to barely block the tip of Ara's spear.

“Ugh?!”

Ara got surprised and panted when her final attack was blocked. Judging by the sweat on her forehead, this skill wasn't something one could use lightly.

“Pinnacle of spear arts, Flying Kite. I thought it was a skill that only existed in ancient stories.....”

“.....”

Ara didn't answer as she tried to hold up her spear right away to stab once more. But Ran could see it coming now. Just when Ran was about to pull up a wall of shadow to block it.....

Booom!

Space tore then Ran's arm holding his sword got deflected to the side. When Ran opened his eyes widely to look.....Add was panting with his hand held out in Elsword's arms.

Wasn't he unconscious.....? No, was he aiming just for this chance?

Powerful foes including Ran had always blocked Add's space attacks by nullifying it. At first glance, it looked like they were making light of it..... But if you thought of it other way around, it meant that it was an attack they had to watch out for by nullifying it no matter what.

Why? Because it's an instant fatal injury if you get hit directly.

Add had calculated this.....so he had been waiting only for this single chance!

“Haaa.....”

Ran's arm with his sword rose up towards the air. In front of him was the blade of Ara's spear. Ran tried to focus but Ara coming in with a shoulder blow was much faster than he could react.

Crack!

Shoulder blow carrying her weight hit directly and broke Ran's collarbone, then a spear swipe to cause a slashing wound in the abdomen, then a slash across Ran's legs followed by a quick side kick!

"Raging Wave!"

It didn't end there as Ara smashed her spear on the ground to shatter it then directly pushed in as she tore apart Ran's shadow.

With his body in tatters from Ara's continuous attacks, Ran had no choice but to get hit helplessly.

"Haaaaah!!"

When Ara gathered the entire energy in her body then drew an arc with her spear.....stream of light got created as it cut through Ran's body.

Ran's body broke down before the spear of justice that tore apart time and space.





“Phew.....”

Ran was defeated. Ara withdrew her spear and gathered her breath. She then turned her gaze towards Add and bowed.

“Thank you for your help, Mr.Add!”

“Cough, cough.....”

Add was about to say something to answer but coughed and shook his head.

It looked like he wanted to snap as usual.....but he couldn't even say a word properly because his condition was very bad. After confirming that Elsword was helping Add stand up, Ara turned her gaze towards collapsed Ran.

“Elder Brother.....”

“.....What will you do now?”

Chung asked as he approached her from behind. Ran was currently completely defenceless. This was a chance for Chung to take his revenge if he wanted. But he was giving Ara a chance to choose right now.

“I'll turn Elder Brother back to human then have him atone for his sins all his life.”

“I see.....”

Chung looked at Ran with a complicated expression and was about to continue his words.... Then he suddenly looked up towards the ceiling. Ara also followed his gaze to look up then got shocked as she quickly grabbed Chung and moved out of the way.

Craaaash!!

Giant armor fell down. Mysterious person that crushed the ground just from falling down quickly grabbed Ran. Chung who saw the person's red-black armor got surprised and shouted loudly.

“Father?!”

Giant armor that was about turn around stopped. But he soon waved his hand to create a dimension gate.

“I'll see you in Velder.”

“Father!!”

Despite Chung's call, man in giant armor took Ran and disappeared through the dimension gate.

It happened all too sudden. Only silence dwelled in the Temple of Water after Ran and the mysterious man disappeared so suddenly.

“.....Chung’s father?”

“Just what’s going on?”

“I, I’m not sure myself. Father was certainly was slashed by Ran’s sword while fighting him then fell down the cliff.....”

Eve spoke calmly when Chung who fell into a state confusion couldn’t continue his words.

“Let’s first get out of here. We also have a patient.”

“.....Who’s a, patient..... cough.”

Add’s condition was quite bad. He coughed whenever he spoke, and blood flowed out of his mouth each time. He hadn’t even recovered from his previous injuries and yet he overworked himself to protect the other Search Party members from Black Destiny’s explosions to the point where his body broke down.

“We won, Add. So don’t overdo it anymore. It will be difficult to go into our next battle if your wounds get worse.”

“.....”

Add pouted but didn’t say anything anymore. Ara who had been standing blankly suddenly got surprised then raised her hand.

“Uh, um we won right? What should we do now?”

“Should we try shouting? We woaaaaon~!”

It seemed Elsword wasn’t joking because he actually shouted loudly. Add who had to listen to Elsword’s shout from right beside him had had his eyes shut tightly as if he was being tortured.

Ara’s face as she was about to follow after Elsword suddenly turned dark. She then bowed towards the others.

“I’m sorry everyone. I troubled all of you.....all because of my stubbornness. I’ll make sure this won’t happen again so please let me.....”

“Hey, Elsword. Cough. Aren’t you hungry?”

“No, I’m actually full.”

Add made a face as if he wanted to punch Elsword. Rena smiled as she shook her head.

“Ara, you don’t have to apologize. Everyone is here because they wanted to.”

“Still, I’m at fault here.

“And it’s our fault for not realizing you were having such a hard time. So let’s just be careful from now on so something like this doesn’t happen again. That should be enough.”

When Rena spoke, Ara made a blank face then tears started dripping from her eyes. At how Ara was crying without a sound.....everyone looked towards Eve.

“.....Why is everyone looking at me like that?”

Eve was startled by the silent pressure that fell upon her. Then Rena pushed Eve’s back and she ended up sticking close to Ara. Ara didn’t notice because she was crying so much.

With crying Ara in front of her, Eve made a troubled expression as she looked around at the others. But no one tried to make eye contact with her.

“It’s fine Ara Haan, no..... Ara. We just have to go forth together again.”

“Yes, yes. Thank you.....”

“You don’t have to thank me. We’re.....”

Nasod that was alone finally realized what she wanted all along and why she was in this place right now.

Eve spoke kindly as she embraced crying Ara close to comfort her.

“Friends after all.”

## 5. Back to the past

The fight in Hamel ended with the defeat of Ran by the El Search Party.

Velder Knights were now set to head back to Velder and the El Search Party was set to go back with them.....to fight Elesis once more.

They were finally going resume their efforts to liberate Velder.

“Once your injuries heal completely.”

Add lying on the bed frowned from this business like voice. Not only Eve, but Rena, Chung, Elsword and Ara were all gathered around his bed.

“What are you all trying to do.....by gathering here?”

“We’ll head back to Velder soon as you are well.”

“Big Brother Add, how are you doing?”

“Hey Add, want me to peel you some apples?”

“Mr.Add, do you have anything you’d like to eat?”

“I’ll use everything that Hamel has to offer to help with your treatment Mr.Add.”

I got it so please get out already. Add pressed on his aching head then tried to shout but coughed instead. It was true that he overdid himself to protect everyone from Black Destiny..... They said his internal organs were damaged a lot.

“Tell me if you need anything.”

Well, he was receiving Eve’s careful nursing thanks to that..... No, but it was honestly bothersome. The two of them were still feeling awkward from what happened before. But Eve was guarding Add’s side with a very businesslike attitude as if she wasn’t going to mention what happened before anymore while saying that Nasods didn’t tire so she was perfect for the job.

Add looked around at the others while frowning.

Even if you considered the other options.....it was better if Elsword wasn’t here, Rena was troublesome because she was too kind and it would be thankful if Ara didn’t injure the patient further.

“Come to think of it.....why are you here?”

Wasn’t Chung a temporary lord? Why was the guy who should be busy with office duties over here? Chung requested carefully.

“I’m also planning to go to Velder. May I go together with you all?”

“.....What about Hamel?”

“I decided to leave it in charge of other people. There shouldn’t be any more threats to Hamel since Ran is gone. Also.....I have to meet my father and find out the truth. Father told me to meet him in Velder so he’ll be there.”

It looked like Chung had already made up his mind so Add replied bluntly.

“Why are you asking for my permission then? Others must have all agreed already right?”

“It won’t do unless Add agrees as well.”

“What do you think Big Brother Add?”

“Mr.Add, please allow Mr.Chung to come with us!”

“Decide.”

Everyone had given their permissions already so only Add’s decision remained. Chung looked very tense when Add looked at him an indifferent expression.

He did take a liking to Chung. It would be a waste to throw him away.

“Well we do need all the help we can get. I’ll make use of you well so go ahead and follow us.”

“Alright, then let’s have a party to welcome Chung!”

“Yes, it must have been hard for everyone right? Let’s all rest together.”

“How about Mr.Add?”

“We can have the party here!”

What are those guying planning to do in someone else’s bedroom? Add was about to shout when Eve opened her mouth first.

“Let’s do that when Add becomes well. We all have to do it together.”

“.....I don’t care. You guys can go have it on your own.”

“Let’s all do it together.”

When Eve refused to yield, Add was about to get frustrated but nodded in the end. Leaving the party matter aside....the problem was what came after.

“Rena and Elsword talk with Penensio and decide on the return date quickly as possible. I can recover on the ship so make the date early as you can.”

“Alright, got it.”

“Chung, how is transition of Hamel’s command going?”

“Ah, it’s already been organized so it will finish most likely day after tomorrow.”

Add nodded.

“Finish it soon as possible. Also, Eve and Ara..... spread the word that the El Search Party defeated the demons in Hamel.”

“Why?”

“It’s to raise the morale of the soldiers for the Velder’s fight. And it might also have some other uses.....”

“Um, that’s.....”

Ara didn’t seem too fond of the idea but Add ignored it.

“What Ran did and what we did are separate matters. You defeated Ran together with us. That’s the truth so you don’t have to worry about it anymore.”

“He’s right. But.....”

Eve was about to get up then looked down at where she was sitting. Add realized what she meant and shook his head.

“Don’t worry. I’m just going to organize some thoughts by myself. So go already.”

“Understood. Let’s go everyone.”

“Okay.”

“Take care of yourself Big Brother!”

“I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Then see you tomorrow, Add.”

Everyone said their parting words and left. Add muttered as he got up from his bed when the room finally became quiet.

“They’re so noisy. There’s never a moment when it’s quiet.....”

His body still prickled but it wasn’t to the point where he couldn’t move. Although it would be better if he refrained from doing something that consumed a lot of mental powers.

“.....So the incident in Hamel is over.”

Honestly, Add almost didn't do anything in this fight. Fights from before were Add looking ahead in time and preparing a countermeasure. But there wasn't any of that this time. Add didn't do much even during the fight with Ran.

Hamel's problem was solved thanks to Eve and Ara's efforts.

Add dwelled on this fact as he headed to the balcony. His mind awoke from the cold night's breeze. Well it was fine long as the result was good.....

"Memory of Time and Space huh....."

Ara also awoke to it, grew up then defeated Ran. Add touched the El in his pocket then laughed slightly.

"Kukukuk, good. If I can just use this well....."

"You can even beat Elly. Is that what you think?"

Add got surprised from the sound that suddenly came from below. White hand seemed to grab the railing then jumped up abruptly. White hair, fox ears on her head and nine tails.

It was Eun.

"Long time no see. You have some nerve showing up now."

"I tried coming out because I heard that boy was injured. Shall I nurse you tenderly?"

"Quit it. You're seriously....."

Eun didn't do anything at all even while Ara was being captured or when they were fighting against Ran. They had been through many dangers..... But there were almost no instances of Eun displaying her true skills to help them defeat the enemy.

She just came out wherever time travel was required. She let Ara do most of the fighting.

"I cannot understand. Do you have some kind of restrictions?"

The whole incident wouldn't have got tangled up and Ara's heart wouldn't have had to suffer so much if Eun could have at least came out during Karis' Death Strike.

"Well it's all fine because the result was good right? The El Search Party's total strength has gone up too. Isn't this the result boy wanted?"

"If you knew this already then you should have told me before..... No, I'll just be quiet."

Eun laughed arrogantly when Add gave up protesting.

"Boy's wits are faster now."

“All I realized is that you are of no help. Get lost already.”

“My, here I came out to have a friendly chat with boy after a long time. How cruel.”

Add turned his head away when Eun wagged her tails.

“So, did you find the answer you were struggling to find?”

“.....”

Add winced at those sudden words. He hasn't had the time to think about it because he had been so busy but it all came back at Eun's words just now.

The feeling that something was off he felt during his talk with Penensio, there was a missing piece in the puzzle. No matter how much he tried, he couldn't complete the picture like this.

“What? What do you know?”

“I know what boy is struggling to figure out. Also.....”

Eun trailed her words then looked across the far ocean. Add patiently waited for an answer but the answer didn't come. So he tried throwing in an issue first.

“Come to think of it, what was that Chaos Shadow? Will we have to face more of those in the future?”

“Super Shadow is a secret weapon of the demons. If the wavelengths doesn't match.....Why are you making such a face?”

Add froze. A bomb fell on his head. The tip of his hands shook. Chill went through his entire body.....and he felt like wanting to collapse.

“What did you just say?”

“I was about to say attacks won't work on it if wavelengths doesn't match.”

“Not that!! What was that thing's name again?!”

Eun smiled voluptuously when Add screamed.

“I said Super Shadow. Why? Is there any problem?”

“.....Ah.”

Add desperately forced himself from letting out a world ending scream.

His throat boiled up. The feeling as if he was going crazy. Painful groan. Add crouched down and hugged himself. He bit his own tongue to prevent his mind from collapsing.



Why did I..... think it was a Chaos Shadow soon as I saw it? Why did the name come up instantly in his head?

“No. No way, no way. This is impossible.....”

Penensio called Shadow Master by the name Shadow Lord. But from the moment when Add first saw it, ever since the moment he saw it in Elder, he called it Shadow Master.

Was there ever a time when Shadow Master introduced itself saying that it was a Shadow Master? You could say Snipers, Chargers, Defenders and such were nicknames that the soldiers gave. But why did he think it was a.....Shadow Master soon as he saw it?

So naturally too.

Big Brother Add, that's reckless. It's not just Ran. That woman called Keris was also at a general's level. You can't handle them by yourself.

It's Karis, not Keris.

Karis never introduced herself. But Add knew soon as he saw her that she was a demon general and that she was Succubus Queen Karis.

Ara knew because she had fought her before..... But how did Add know?

He recognized Victor soon as he saw him.

He recognized dying Berthe soon as he saw him.

More of all.....

“I knew.....Ran.”

In Elder, he saw Ran trying to destroy Eve and screamed the name Dark Count Ran naturally. Even though no one had told him and there was no self introduction.

Add's face distorted in fear. His fidgeting hand was unconsciously pressing on his eye patch.

“Why? Why did I know? Why? No one told me. But.....”

“.....”

While desperately holding on to his mind to prevent it from breaking, while trying his best to not lose himself from this unknown terror, Add forced himself to get up with his shaking legs.

“But I..... I knew everything.”

He knew what he shouldn't have known. Things that others shouldn't know.....only Add knew them all. And Add knew how this could be possible.

Add suppressed his fear and stared at Eun. Eun was looking at the sea with a bitter expression.

“What is this? Just....what the hell is this?”

“What do you think it is?”

Add knew what others shouldn't have known. There was only one occasion for this.

Time travel.

Add knew what would happen in the future because he time traveled.

Just like how he knew back in Elder that Shadow Master would appear soon as the Wally Robot was defeated. Just like how he knew Elesis would ambush them as their enemy.

He knew what Shadow Master was.

He knew who Ran was.

He knew who Berthe was.

He knew who Karis was.

He knew them all even though no one had told him.

It was a terrifying truth. Suppressing the feeling of wanting to deny this, keeping himself from throwing up, Add asked with a shaking voice.

“.....Just how many times has it been?”

This couldn't be happening. But the reality was conveying it to him. Suppressing the urge of wanting to tear apart his brain, Add inhaled heavily as he shouted.

"Just how many times has it been!!?"

Eun smiled from the question that he wished there wasn't an answer to. Soon as she smiled and waved her hand, there was a flash of light then her outfit changed.

Eun paused for a long while after dressing up in a dark black armor. Add was rather thankful for her pause. It was an answer he didn't want to hear forever. He wanted the time to stop right now.

But there was only one conclusion that could be derived. The reason Add naturally knew things he shouldn't have known was.....

"This is boy's 20 million, 131 thousand, 218<sup>th</sup> challenge in this broken world, in this broken time."

Fox smiled like the Devil.

"It's a number more than enough to drive one insane."

He needed to know.

But he never wanted to know.



